

A PRAGMATIC ALLIANCE

Jewish–Lithuanian Political Cooperation
at the Beginning of the 20th Century

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*פון דער קאנפעדעראציע פון גרויס
פראסענסום ליטא.*

Edited by **Vladas Sirutavičius** and **Darius Staliūnas**



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Edited by

Vladas Sirutavičius and Darius Staliūnas



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E-mail: mgreenwald@sorosny.org

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Introduction

V. SIRUTAVIČIUS AND D. STALIŪNAS

The issue of political relations of Lithuanians and Jews in modern times has received little attention from researchers.¹ The ethnocentric view that prevailed in Lithuanian historiography for a long time did not leave much space for the history of other national groups, and when the relations of Lithuanians and people of other nationalities were finally addressed, the focus was placed on the Polish-Lithuanian conflict. The Lithuanians did not play a significant role in the context of political history of the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe—particularly before World War I—thus their modest place in historiography. The chapters collected in this volume aim to fill the existing gap by discussing the political relations of Lithuanians and Jews at the end of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. More specific, the chapters seek to identify what political ideal the Lithuanians had and what place was assigned to the Jews in autonomous Lithuania within the Russian empire? How various Jewish political movements envisioned the future of that country? Which political Lithuanian and Jewish groups and parties tended to collaborate, and which were in confrontation? How the relations of the political elites of both ethnic groups changed as the empire was becoming more liberal, and World War I broke out? What was the influence of the Polish factor on the Lithuanian-Jewish relations? And, what was the influence of the German occupational administration on the relations of these two national groups?

The period under discussion can be divided into two parts. The first period covers the years of the existence of the Russian empire (in Lithuania's case it lasted until 1915, when the territory was occupied by the Germans). And the years of World War I followed by the territorial formation of the national Lithuanian state, which lasted until about 1923, when the integration of the Vilnius region into the Second Republic of Poland was internationally legitimized. As long as the Vilnius question was at least theoretically open, the Lithuanians considered the Jews to be

important allies, able to help them both on the international arena and in the Vilnius region. After 1923, the role of Jews as actual or potential allies considerably decreased. It is also important to note that the Lithuanians' political weight grew considerably during the years of German occupation, thus the remaining nations of the former lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), including the Jews, had to regard the political aspirations of the Lithuanians more seriously.

The political program of the modern Lithuanian national movement projected territorial autonomy, and later a national state, in which Lithuanians had to become the dominant group. The modern understanding of Lithuania was ethnolinguistic: "In any event, the ancient concept of nationality derived from one's native country has disappeared. It has been replaced by the social concept derived from the distinctiveness of the language. By the same token, a historic Lithuania is replaced by an ethnographic Lithuania. . . . For us today's Lithuania is three instead of six *gubernias*, and its limits extend as far as the living signs of our language can reach."² Thus, the nucleus of the new Lithuania had to consist of a territory with a predominantly Lithuanian-speaking population. But such a Lithuania would have been very small, and without Vilnius, historical continuity could hardly have been grounded. Therefore the Lithuanians most often spoke for autonomy in the ethnographic limits, that is in the territory where the majority of the population were Lithuanians by descent. Certainly, various Lithuanian political groups had different visions of the limits of the projected autonomous Lithuania, and even different individuals of the same group would alter their requirements depending on the situation. It would not be wrong to think that both the left-wing and the right-wing leaders of Lithuanian society envisioned a Lithuania, in which Lithuanians constituted the majority and were politically dominant.³ According to some projects of the Lithuanian national movement, the Lithuanian-speaking population had to constitute even less than half of the population, but in these cases they most probably expected to "bring back" to the Lithuanian nation at least part of the inhabitants of the ethnic borderlands of Lithuanians and Eastern Slavs, and even some representatives of the Polonized nobility. Vilnius was situated in the required territory as well. It was the inclusion of Vilnius in the newly shaped Lithuania that constituted a very important Lithuanian argument showing the historical continuity between modern Lithuania and the GDL. The importance of Vilnius becomes particularly obvious, if we recall that although claiming to be guided by historical law, Lithuanian politicians in fact did not intend to restore the Lithuania that was annihilated by Russia, Prussia,

and Austria at the end of the eighteenth century. Thus, at the end of the Romanov rule, the requirement to grant Lithuania political autonomy in the ethnographic limits with the capital Vilnius became firmly established in the Lithuanian political programs.⁴

For people of other nationalities, the status of national minorities was projected. The left-wing Lithuanian parties tended to take into account the interests of other national groups and grant them more rights. The Jews (also because as an extra-territorial nation, they did not have territorial claims), like the Belarusians, were regarded as a nation that caused relatively small problems for the Lithuanian national project compared to the Poles. As can be seen from the chapter by Vladimir Levin in this volume, even a leftist Lithuanian politician, *Trudovik* Andrius Bulota, was ready to respect the Jewish rights in autonomous Lithuania, but only from the point of view of the Lithuanian interests.

The possibilities of Lithuanian and Jewish political cooperation were limited not only by Lithuanian ethnolinguistic nationalism, but also by their Judophobia. Most important, like in the earlier periods, strong religious anti-Judaism still existed, which most often served as a pretext for generally not numerous pogroms in Lithuania.⁵ In the Lithuanian national movement, particularly in the last decade of the nineteenth century, strong economic antisemitism prevailed. In other words, the Jews were realized as an obstacle not allowing Lithuanians to establish themselves in trade and crafts. In the later period this motif remained prominent in the Lithuanian organizations and periodic press of the Catholic trend.

At the same time, there were factors that encouraged cooperation. Unlike the Poles and even the Russians, the Jews did not pose any danger to the Lithuanians in the ethnocultural respect, at least directly.⁶ The Lithuanians and the Jews could have been united to eliminate discrimination on the ethnic/national or confessional basis. The Lithuanians were even interested in the abolishment of some specific anti-Jewish laws, such as the Pale of Settlement. In this case this requirement was determined not only by the democratic views of some Lithuanian politicians, but also by the particular interests of the Lithuanians; that is, their wish that the number of Jews in Lithuania decrease, which would allow Lithuanians to establish themselves in cities and take up business. However, the most important motif that encouraged Lithuanian politicians to cooperate with the Jews had to do with the search for allies in their struggle against the main enemy—the Poles. As was already mentioned, Vilnius and its environs were included in autonomous Lithuania projected by the Lithuanians. In the city itself, whose inhabitants were predominantly Jews and Poles,

Lithuanians—according to the 1897 census—constituted only 2.1 percent of all inhabitants.

At that time, political tendencies seeking to liberalize and democratize the Russian empire prevailed on the “Jewish street”; thus, territorial autonomy or partition of the empire was not on its priority list. At the end of the empire’s existence, this ethnoconfessional community in fact had become “Russian Jews”; they saw themselves as subjects of that state, despite being one of the most discriminated non-dominant national groups.⁷ The Bund, the most influential Jewish party in the so-called Northwestern region (today’s Lithuania and Belarus), spoke for Russia’s democratization, though also demanded granting of the self-government rights to the empire’s non-Russian fringes, and from 1901 supported the idea of ex-territorial national cultural autonomy. Simon Dubnow, a famous Jewish politician and historian of the twentieth-century Russian empire, also stood against the territorial division of the existing state; he thought that Russia’s disintegration would mean economic decline and would definitely lead to national conflicts. In his opinion, the best solution would be putting into life national personal autonomy, which would allow satisfying the cultural needs of different nations and avoiding territorial conflicts. The Zionists held a more favorable view of the existence of national-territorial autonomy, though proposed to coordinate this principle with the system of national-personal autonomy. Apparently in other Central and Eastern European countries it was also the Zionists among all Jewish parties that would most easily find a common language with politicians of the “peasant” nations. For example, in Galicia, an electoral coalition of Ruthenians (Ukrainians) and the Zionists at the beginning of the twentieth century was determined by similar motifs as in Lithuania. Like the Ruthenians, the Zionists sought political emancipation, but did not have “territorial claims” on Galicia. Moreover, they were united by anti-Polish views.⁸ Conversely, the Integrationists (People’s Group) differed from similar political movements in Western Europe. According to Levin, they regarded the Jews as a religious-historical group and required “equal national rights” for Jews, but did not explain in more detail what it should mean.

The attitude of Jewish political movements toward the Lithuanians as political partners contained the factors that both hindered and encouraged cooperation. Mordechai Zalkin places emphasis on the first. During the entire “long nineteenth century,” the majority of Jews and the politicians who represented them did not regard Lithuanians who were mainly peasants as a nation or generally an educated society of high culture, and thus

did not see them as potential political partners. This attitude toward the Lithuanian-speaking peasants also determined their view of the Lithuanian national movement, which was not even considered an important political power in the region. It is not surprising that, as Levin notes, the Jewish press did not even mention the most prominent Lithuanian political event during the Revolution of 1905—the Lithuanian Congress (historiographically known as the Great Seimas of Vilnius), which took place in Vilnius at the end of 1905.

When the Lithuanian national movement could no longer be ignored, particularly after the Revolution of 1905, let alone World War I, the wish of the Lithuanians to achieve territorial autonomy, in which they would be the dominant nation, caused a great deal of anxiety on the “Jewish street.” In their chapters, Zalkin and Darius Staliūnas discuss some cases when Jewish politicians considered the Poles as a more cultured nation with political experience and a more reliable partner than the Lithuanians. As can be seen from the course of the elections to the First Russian Duma in the Suwałki *gubernia* discussed in Staliūnas’s chapter, at least at that time the Jews were opposed to the Lithuanians’ aim to separate the Suwałki *gubernia*—where the Lithuanians constituted the majority—from the Kingdom of Poland and annex it to the Northwestern region. The logic of the Jewish electors was clear: since the times of Aleksandr Wielopolski’s reforms in the Kingdom of Poland in 1862, the Jews enjoyed the same rights as other subjects of the Kingdom, while in the Pale of Settlement they suffered from discrimination. Lithuanian antisemitism did not develop unnoticed by the Jews.

Conversely, the analysis presented in Levin’s chapter reveals the pre-conditions for cooperation between the politicians representing these two nations. Basically all Jewish political movements and parties were in opposition to the regime of the Romanov empire,⁹ and the Lithuanians—who were also at the bottom of the empire’s “ethnic hierarchy”—were their natural allies. The growing Polish antisemitism in the Kingdom of Poland, and partly in the northwestern region, particularly in the movement of the National Democrats, also encouraged Jewish politicians to cooperate with Lithuanians. It was one of the crucial circumstances in the formation of the Lithuanian-Jewish electoral bloc in the Kaunas *gubernia* during the elections to all four Russian Dumas. This generalized picture of the political forces that represented two national groups should be supplemented by a discussion of the views and activities of concrete political groups and parties.

The left-wing parties traditionally tended to collaborate more easily. The leaders of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP) maintained

close contacts with the Jewish Social Democrats in Vilnius since the beginning of their activity in the city at the end of the nineteenth century. It was both collaboration and competition, and the latter particularly increased in 1898, when the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) was formed. The Russified members of the Bund (the General Jewish Labor Bund of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia) made a great contribution to the founding of RSDLP. Initially they sought to integrate the LSDP into the RSDLP, and when this attempt failed, tried to win the ordinary members of the LSDP over to their side. Despite this competition and disagreement, which was related to the status of Lithuania (the Bund and the RSDLP spoke for the variant of a centralized, though democratized Russia, while the LSDP sought a certain form of Lithuania's statehood), LSDP leaders and the Bund collaborated in carrying out their illegal activity.¹⁰ As Levin notes, competition between the Bund and the LSDP was weaker than between the Bund and the *Polish* Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, hereafter "*PPS*"). This was also due to the fact that the Lithuanian Social Democrats, unlike the Polish Socialists, did not question the Bund's right to existence. Moreover, their target groups differed: the Bund was oriented toward Jews, while the LSDP focused on Christian workers and poor peasants. The LSDP had few Jewish members, and the attempts of the Lithuanian Social Democrats to publish their press in Yiddish were episodic.

Very important for the dynamics of mutual relations of the politicians representing both national groups in the early twentieth century were the elections to the Russian Dumas.¹¹ As can be seen from the contributions by Levin and Staliūnas, the Lithuanian-Jewish electoral alliance that had been formed for the elections to the First Russian Duma was of a "technical" nature, mainly determined by non-democratic election laws and anti-Polish views. During the elections, particularly at the outset, certain groups on both sides gave priority to a union with the Poles, but in the end those who supported the Lithuanian-Jewish agreement prevailed. In the elections to the First Russian Duma in the Kaunas *gubernia*, which is the most important from the viewpoint of the topic under discussion, the appearance of the electoral alliance was mostly caused by the anti-Polish views of one of the leaders of the Lithuanian national movement, Jonas Basanavičius. The majority of peasant electors were inclined to make agreement with the landowners' curia, and it was only thanks to Basanavičius' shrewd negotiation skills and posing of unacceptable conditions for the landowners that the position of the majority of Lithuanian electors changed and an agreement with representatives of the burghers'

(Jewish) curia was reached. During the elections to the Second Duma in the Kaunas *gubernia*, the greatest influence was exerted by the LSDP, which due to its social and economic radicalism had a clear anti-landowner bias, thus an alliance with the Jews representing oppositional parties was almost inevitable. From the Jewish side, the main partners of the Lithuanians during the Duma elections in the Kaunas *gubernia* were liberally minded politicians. During the 1905 Revolution it was the Union for Equal Rights for the Jews in Russia and the Kadets led by Naftali Fridman, who was a member of the Third and Fourth Dumas. The Lithuanians elected to the Dumas, most of all Bulota, often supported Jewish requirements and vice versa. In the elections to the Third and Fourth Russian Dumas, the Jewish-Lithuanian cooperation in the Kaunas *gubernia* continued. In the elections to the Fourth Russian Duma in the Suwałki *gubernia*, Jewish electors together with representatives of the Lithuanian left-wing parties competed against the Lithuanian clergymen and lost. This episode shows that the Lithuanian-Jewish agreements during the elections to the Dumas were not as stable as was sometimes asserted in earlier historiography.

The contributions focusing on the period of the Russian empire note that even in those cases when Jewish and Lithuanian politicians did collaborate, it happened because of tactical circumstances rather than some basic strategic aims. The arising disagreements about political issues, above all autonomy (territorial versus personal), did not grow into more acute conflicts, mainly because the nature of the political regime of the Romanov empire did not allow any autonomy. However, the political aims of the Jews, on the one hand, and the Lithuanians, on the other hand, entailed a conflict. The Lithuanians' desire to receive territorial autonomy, where they would be the dominant nation, conflicted with the wish of the majority of Jewish political movements to democratize Russia without changing the existing state boundaries. Even if Jewish politicians spoke about Lithuania, they had in mind the former lands of the GDL (in the case of the Bund) rather than a territory, in which the Lithuanians projected their territorial autonomy and later a national state. A promise of Jewish electors to support the requirement of Lithuania's autonomy, made before the elections in Kaunas *gubernia* to the Second Russian Duma, did not imply what Lithuania was meant. The fact that while giving this promise, the Jews envisioned the Lithuanians as partners in the elections, would probably allow us to raise a hypothesis that in this case the ethnographic Lithuania was meant. However, one should not discard a possibility that the Jews spoke about "their own" Lithuania, which approximately

corresponded with the Northwestern region of the Russian empire. Conversely, this decision did not appear in the Kaunas *gubernia* by accident. In this *gubernia*—unlike for example in the Vilnius *gubernia* or the city of Vilnius—the Lithuanians were the main political power, thus the Jews had to give it a more serious consideration.

World War I radically changed the situation. Like the other nations of the Russian empire, the Jews not only suffered from basic deprivations caused by the war, but also experienced more persecution, when the Russian army decided to move them from the front-line areas and the ethnic Lithuania.¹² This led to the considerable decrease in the percentage of Jews in Lithuania. From the fall of 1915, Lithuania was occupied by the Germans, and the solving of the needs of daily survival and the ethnocultural or political needs of separate national groups for the most part began to depend on the administration of the administrative-territorial unit *Oberost*, formed in the lands occupied by the German army on the Eastern front.

Historiographical studies assert that at the beginning of the German occupation the situation of at least part of the Jews improved compared to the conditions that existed under the czarist regime, which was proved by the fact that deportations ended. Thus the Gentiles suspected the Jews of collaborating with the Germans.¹³ The statements about the policy of *divide et impera* executed by the Germans, occurring in historiography,¹⁴ so far have not been backed by more solid research.¹⁵ Although it seems that despite the improved situation of the Jews, in the geopolitical respect a pro-Russian orientation continued to dominate on the “Jewish street.” As Marcos Silber notes, it was probably because of that reason that the Vilnius-based democratically minded Tsemah Szabad and Grigorii Romm did not sign the documents of the restoration of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania on a democratic basis compiled by the Lithuanian, Belarusian, and Polish Democrats in December 1915–February 1916.¹⁶ This geopolitical orientation was also characteristic of Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite (the Jewish Cultural Union in Lithuania) established in 1917, which did not have a clear party or political orientation. The majority of at least the Vilnius Jewish community continued to think that the most useful thing for Jews would be to democratize Russia by granting a self-government or autonomy to non-Russian border areas. Their pro-Russian orientation was also supported by the fact that after the February Revolution of 1917, discriminative laws applied to the Jews were abolished. In the meantime, the nationalisms of local, often “peasant” nations aroused anxiety and fear for the Jews. In the new political formations and national states, whose basis

was the peasants and the intelligentsia descended from the peasants, the Jews could have found themselves in the position of the culturally discriminated. Besides, if the economic links with Russia had been broken, their social and economic positions would have grown weak. Among all these nationalisms, the Lithuanians began to manifest themselves more distinctly, though with “outside” help.

Germany began to direct its political attention to the Lithuanians in 1917, when it became clear that Germany’s politics in Poland was unsuccessful, and the German administration began to foster plans of building a Lithuanian political formation dependent on Germany. The changed geopolitical situation—Revolution in Russia, the movements of the revolutionary and national liberation in East Europe, the United States joining the war—made Germany conceal its plans of annexation and play the card of “national self-determination.”¹⁷

On 18–22 September 1917, upon permission of the occupational administration, the Lithuanian Conference that took place in Vilnius elected a council of twenty members, with a provision that it would be joined by representatives of the national minorities. As can be seen from the chapters by Silber and Eglė Bendikaitė,¹⁸ Lithuanian politicians sought to build a national state. The Council had to choose the representatives of other nations, who also had to approve of the goal of independence of Lithuania (in its ethnographic limits) and to speak Lithuanian.

Although representatives of the Vilnius Jewish community found all these conditions unacceptable, they began mutual consultations and negotiations with the Lithuanians. The greatest initiative was shown by the Zionists who operated in Vilnius, above all Shimshon Rosenboim. The representatives of the Vilnius Jews tended to negotiate with the Lithuanians not only because they wanted to keep pace with the current political processes and were urged by the German occupational administration to join the Council, but also because the Poles refused to acknowledge the Jews as equal partners.¹⁹ In this situation, particularly with the deepening Polish-Lithuanian territorial conflict, the leaders of the Vilnius Jews, above all the Zionists, were inclined to look for a compromise with the Lithuanians. However, as long as the Lithuanians felt the support of the occupational administration and did not plan to discard the model of a national state in the ethnographic limits, it was difficult to reach an agreement. Jewish politicians did not change their basic requirements until the very end of the German occupation in December 1918. They claimed that the Council was not elected by democratic means, and being mono-national it could not democratically represent the entire country. They also

claimed that the Jews, taking into account their percentage, were entitled to more than two seats; Jewish representatives had to be elected in a general congress; the Grodno and Białystok regions had to be included in Lithuania, which was under formation. Another variant offered by Jewish politicians to the occupational administration was to form similar councils representing other nations.

Supplementing earlier historiography, this volume not only reveals the inner workings of the Vilnius Zionists and shows Rosenboim's exceptional role in providing information to the world's Zionist centers about the events in Lithuania and in negotiating with the Lithuanians (see Bendikaite's chapter), but also analyzes the views of other Jewish political groups on the issue of Lithuania's statehood. According to Silber, unlike the pro-German policy of the majority of the Zionists, in 1917–1918 the Bundists and the Folkists followed the pro-Russian orientation and sought to build an autonomous political unit in the former lands of the GDL, which would be part of democratic Russia. The Jewish politicians of these movements also criticized the Lithuanian Council because of its pro-German character.

In the meantime, the publication dedicated to the meeting of Jews that took place in 1917 in Petrograd, which solved the question of joining the Temporary Committee for Lithuania's Administration, reveals that Jewish politicians of different regions of Lithuania held different views regarding modern (national) Lithuania. The Jewish leaders of the Kaunas *gubernia* were more favorably inclined to cooperate with the Lithuanians than for example those from Vilnius. In comparison with the other Lithuanian *gubernias*, the Lithuanians had the greatest political influence in the Kaunas *gubernia*, thus the Jews did not find it to their advantage to confront them.²⁰

However, despite the political disagreements between the politicians representing the Lithuanians and the Jews, three Jewish representatives were delegated to the Lithuanian Council during the Zionist conference that took place on 5–8 December 1918, in Vilnius. Why and how did it happen?

According to earlier Lithuanian historiography, the Jewish representatives joined the Council without advancing any requirements, thus having accepted the activity of the Council and the Lithuanian political program.²¹ At the same time the formation of such an alliance has been explained by some historians as being exclusively a result of the changed position of the Lithuanians. Supposedly the revolution that took place in Germany made it clear that the German occupational regime and with it

the main source of power of the Lithuanian Council had come to an end, which meant that the emerging political void would be filled by a stronger power. The Lithuanians had to fear both the claims of the Poles to annex Vilnius and at least part of Lithuania, and the Soviet regime built by the Bolsheviks in Lithuania.²² One could agree with the fact that at the end of 1918, the situation of the Lithuanian Council became complicated, and the Council needed allies. The German occupational administration urged the Lithuanians to involve representatives of other nations in the activity of the Council; some members of the Council were also in favor of this idea.²³ Somewhat earlier than the Jews, Belarusian representatives joined the Council's work.

However, as the research published in this volume shows,²⁴ the Vilnius Zionists also found themselves in a complicated situation. The same circumstances influencing the Lithuanians, forced the Zionists to look for allies. As the German army was retreating from Lithuania, the positions of the Zionists who followed the pro-German orientation weakened. The fact that the Bolsheviks favored by some Bund activists took root in Lithuania also did not promise anything good for the Jews. After the Belarusians joined the activity of the Lithuanian Council, and the Poles did not intend to treat the Jews more seriously, the Jewish politicians of the non-Socialist trend felt a threat of isolation. The fact that the Belarusians joined the Council, as Silber notes, created an illusion for the Vilnius Zionists that the Council began to change its political views and orient itself toward the model of multinational Lithuania.

One should not think by any means that the Zionists' position coincided with the views of the entire Jewish community. For example, somewhat earlier than the Zionist congress in Vilnius, the same issue was discussed by a committee for distributing charity to Jews, which included representatives of the Vilnius, Kaunas, and Grodno *gubernias* and the Białystok district, and which withheld making a decision with regard to joining the Council.²⁵ Although the failure to adopt a decision was determined by formal reasons (the members of the committee did not know about the issue under discussion beforehand), this outcome obviously reveals the absence of unanimous agreement on the "Jewish street" on whether to join the Lithuanian-dominated Council.

The Zionist conference held at the beginning of December 1918 was important in that the Zionist organizations operating in the Lithuanian territory were united into a single Zionist union separated from Russia, which clearly showed the changing orientation of this political movement—an increasing tendency of isolation from Russia. The conference

questioned the legitimacy of the Council's activity, as it was not democratically elected by all inhabitants of the country, and repeated the earlier requirements of the Zionists. These covered the inclusion of Lithuania's historical lands in the future state; proportional representation of all national groups in governmental institutions; the granting of national-personal autonomy; they also sought that the Council would not impede the assembling of a representational Jewish congress.²⁶

On 11 December 1918, the Council co-opted the Zionist representatives Nahman Rachmilewitz, Shimshon Rosenboim, and Jakub Wygodzki. However, it would not be correct to state that by co-opting the Zionist representatives, the Council agreed with all their requirements. Prime Minister Augustinas Voldemaras presented the Zionist position and requirements to the Council in milder formulations than they were presented at the conference. The Jews supposedly supported the goal of Lithuania's independence (the territory of future independent Lithuania was not specified); the Council was regarded as a temporary organ (a different way of saying that it was not elected democratically); and the requirement of national-personal autonomy was raised. A clear answer was not given to the question of the Council member Mykolas Biržiška whether the three candidates advanced for co-optation were already all the Jewish representatives (the Zionists sought to receive seven seats in the Council). The statements delivered by Lithuanians, above all Antanas Smetona, were rather general—all nations were promised equal rights in the future Lithuanian state. It was not specified how the equality of rights would be ensured.²⁷ To generalize, one can state that the confidential negotiations of the Lithuanians and the Jews ended in a compromise agreement.

One can only guess what the content of that agreement was, as it was not publicly disclosed by either side. It may have been determined by several circumstances; both Lithuanian and Jewish politicians considered it as non-final, temporary. Thus it was quite probable that the discussion of some issues, which caused disagreement between Lithuanian and Jewish politicians, such as the territory of the state (ethnographic or historical), might have been postponed till the international situation of Lithuania became clearer. Conversely, the decision not to publicize the agreement might have been caused by its compromise nature itself. The reached compromise was sensitive and vulnerable enough. If publicly announced, the agreement might have become an object of criticism in both Lithuanian and Jewish societies. Thus it is quite probable that with the aim to avoid such criticism and retain the future prospect of cooperation, the agreement was not announced. Finally, the agreement may have been oral

only. Both sides did not see any point in making it official and most probably avoided signing anything. The relations between the Lithuanian and Jewish political groups were complicated enough, and the future prospect of Lithuania's statehood was too vague.

It is important to consider on what principles a compromise between the Lithuanians and the Zionist Jews could have been based. It is probable that while making a compromise with the Lithuanian Council, the Vilnius Zionists referred to two principles: legal and actual equality of Jews and other inhabitants of Lithuania, above all Lithuanians; and the establishment of national-cultural autonomy. These requirements were put forth in the 1918 Copenhagen Manifesto of the Zionists. Most likely the Lithuanian politicians regarded these two principles as acceptable. This conclusion, although indirectly, could be confirmed by Augustinas Voldemaras's letter of 5 August 1919, delivered to the Committee of the Jewish delegations at the Paris Peace Conference.²⁸ It was noted in the letter, which is often called a declaration in Lithuanian historiography, that the Jews not only had full civic, political, and national rights, "are or shall be proportionately represented" in legislative institutions, but also were guaranteed wide national-cultural autonomy, even the right to establish the Ministry of Jewish Affairs.²⁹

What could have been that principle advanced by Lithuanian political figures that the Jews would consider acceptable? In our opinion, it could be formulated in the following way: Lithuanians were a political nation constituting the state of Lithuania. In his letter Voldemaras noted that the Lithuanian language was "recognized as the state language," and asserted that all juridical and public institutions, excluding the organs of Jewish national autonomy, should correspond in the state language only. The teaching of the Lithuanian language was obligatory in all Jewish schools. It should be noted that the statement about the status of Lithuanian as the state language was not included in the temporary constitution and appeared only in Voldemaras's declaration.

To generalize, one could assert that the Lithuanian-Jewish agreement reached in December 1918 was rather close to a compromise and temporary deal; a "marriage of convenience," metaphorically speaking. The authors represented in this volume agree with the conclusion predominant in historiography that Lithuanian politicians mostly needed help in solving the question of the historical capital Vilnius and in establishing Lithuania's statehood on the international arena. One could also assert that for the Zionist Jews, the agreement with the Lithuanians opened a prospect of not only putting into life the goal of national autonomy, but also becoming

dominant in the Jewish community in general. Contributions by Vladas Sirutavičius and Theodore R. Weeks specifically address the issue of how the Lithuanian-Jewish agreement operated in practice.

In his text, Sirutavičius discusses the circumstances of Jewish participation in the elections to the Constituent Seimas in April 1920. The main task of the Seimas was to adopt the state constitution and to lay the foundations for the land reform. The Lithuanian political elite sought to involve the Jews in the building of the Lithuanian state, thus the government created all formal juridical preconditions for Jewish participation in the elections. Representatives of the Zionist Jews participated in preparing the election law and worked at the Chief Election Committee. On the eve of the elections, a temporary law regulating the activity of Jewish communities was adopted. Incidentally, the law was adopted at the time when the first congress of Jewish communities took place. The National Jewish Council formed during the congress, in which the Zionists played the basic role, became actively involved in the elections. The National Jewish Council actively urged the communities to participate in the elections, to register in the electors' lists and check them. It is important to note that the reliability and preciseness of the electors' lists was one of the main problems in the elections to the Constituent Seimas. Unfortunately, it is practically impossible to establish how many Jews with the right to vote lived in Lithuania during the elections. Officially only the number of those who voted for the Jewish list was announced.

Sirutavičius draws attention to another important point. If the Lithuanian administration at least publicly declared the necessity of cooperation with the Jews, the attitude of Lithuanian society to the role of the Jews in building a modern national state was much more contradictory. The analysis of the Lithuanian press and election agitation reveals the fear pervading Lithuanian society that the Jews—along with the Poles—might become dominant in the state. It was asserted that during the elections, the Jews, who were better organized, might receive disproportionately many votes, which would pose a threat to the fate of national Lithuania. Such views testify to the fact that in Lithuanian society the Lithuanian-Jewish agreement was not popular. And this only proves once again that the Lithuanian-Jewish agreement did not have a more solid socio-political base and was merely a convenient and temporary political deal.

Theodore R. Weeks analyzes the position of the Vilnius Jews between 1920 and 1922. Although pro-Polish moods obviously existed on the “Jewish street” in Vilnius, particularly after the allegedly rebellious units of Lucjan Żeligowski seized Vilnius at the end of 1920 the majority of the

Jews considered the inclusion of the Vilnius region in the Second Republic of Poland as one of the worst possible variants discussed at that time. The inclusion of that region in the Republic of Lithuania seemed more acceptable to the majority of Jewish politicians, as Polish antisemitism seemed stronger than Lithuanian.³⁰ It was also hoped that the Lithuanians who needed Jewish support in the struggle for Vilnius would be compelled to build a “state of nations” rather than a national state, without one dominant national group. However, despite these moods, during the elections to the Seimas of Central Lithuania, whose sole planned function was to announce the fact that the Vilnius region had been annexed to Poland, Jewish political groups did not openly boycott the elections. According to Weeks, the Jews would not have won anything by assuming a clearly positive or negative position with regard to the elections. The Polish electors had the majority, thus the election results could be easily predicted, while the Jews did not dare to openly urge a boycott of the elections for fear of the Poles’ revenge. The Parliament of Central Lithuania was mainly elected with the votes of Poles, and a decision to cede the Vilnius region to Poland was adopted.

To sum up, in the early twentieth century, the Lithuanian-Jewish political contacts and even the reached agreements—the relations of the Social Democratic parties, a common bloc at the Russian Duma elections, the Zionists’ joining the Lithuanian Council in December 1918—were reminiscent of a pragmatic, that is convenient alliance, rather than a firm union based on common principles.

NOTES

- 1 The research and publication of this project was supported by the Research Council of Lithuania (reg. no.: PMK-03/2010-AB).
- 2 The quote belongs to one of the leaders of Lithuanian nationalism, later the first president, Antanas Smetona; A. Smetona, “Lietuvio žymės,” *Viltis*, 1912, no. 136.
- 3 This is the response of the Lithuanian Social Democrat Steponas Kairys to the proposal to restore the state in the limits of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania and form a federation with Poland in 1919, presented by the envoy of Józef Piłsudski, Michał Römer: “Even if they acted in the spirit of Piłsudski’s program, Lithuanians would not lose by any means the exact idea of their national state, which impels them to accept only such a territory, in which other elements would not outnumber Lithuanians in the common state, and which would allow them to feel as the proper nucleus of the people in the state”; cited in M. Römeris, *Dienoraštis. 1918 m. birželio 13-oji–1919 m. birželio 20-oji* (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2007), p. 376.

- 4 As is known, this requirement was also included in the resolution of the Lithuanian Congress (the Great Seimas of Vilnius), which took place at the end of 1905 in Vilnius; E. Motieka, "Didysis Vilniaus Seimas," in *Lietuvių Atgimimo istorijos studijos*, vol. 11 (Vilnius: Saulabrolis, 1996).
- 5 For more on this issue, see *Kai ksenofobija virsta prievarta. Lietuvių ir žydų santykių dinamika XIX a.–XX a. pirmojoje pusėje*, ed. V. Sirutavičius, D. Staliūnas (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2005); D. Staliūnas, Litauen, *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. von W. Benz, Vol. 1: Länder und Regionen (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2008), pp. 217–221; V. Sirutavičius and D. Staliūnas, "Was Lithuania a Pogrom-Free Zone? (1881–1940)," in *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, ed. D. Gaunt, I. Bartal, and J. Dekel-Chen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 144–158.
- 6 The leaders of the Lithuanian national movement were above all worried by the spread of the Russian language on the "Jewish street," particularly in cities.
- 7 E. Lederhendler, "Did Russian Jewry Exist Prior to 1917?" in *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and Soviet Union*, ed. Y. Ro'i (Portland: Frank Cass, 1995), pp. 15–27; J. D. Klier, "Why Were Russian Jews Not Kaisertreu?" *Ab Imperio*, 4 (2003): 41–58.
- 8 J. Shanes and Y. Petrovsky Shtern, "An Unlikely Alliance: The 1907 Ukrainian–Jewish Electoral Coalition," *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 3 (2009): 486.
- 9 Jewish Orthodox politicians did not manage to obtain at least minimal concessions from the imperial authorities after the Revolution of 1905. The Russian authorities, continuing the old tradition, regarded the Jews as one—insidious and dangerous—community. V. Levin, "Orthodox Jewry and the Russian Government: An Attempt at Rapprochement, 1907–1914," *East European Jewish Affairs* 39 (2009): 187–204.
- 10 A. Vyšniauskas, "Lietuvos socialdemokratijos politinė transformacija 1898 metais" [The political transformation of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party in 1898], in *Lietuvių Atgimimo istorijos studijos*, vol. 3: *Lietuvos valstybės idėja (XIX a.–XX a. pradžia)* (Vilnius: Žaltvykslė, 1991), pp. 67–131.
- 11 Previously published works on this topic include N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip: the Construction of Lithuanian Identity in Imperial Russia," PhD diss., Brandeis University, pp. 361–395; V. Levin, "Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections, 1906–1907," in *Jews and Slavs*, vol. 7, ed. W. Moskovich, L. Finberg, and M. Feller (Jerusalem and Kyiv, 2000), pp. 233–264; V. Levin, "Politics at the Crossroads – Jewish Parties and the Second Duma Elections 1907," in *Leipziger Beiträge zur jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. von D. Diner, Band II, 2004, pp. 129–146.
- 12 S. Goldin, "Deportatsiia russkoi armiei evreev iz Kovenskoi i Kurliandskoi gubernii (aprel'–mai 1915 g.)," in *Evrei v meniaiushchemsia mire. Materialy 5-i mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii, Riga, 16–17 sentiabria 2003 g.*, ed. G. Branover and R. Ferber (Riga, 2005), pp. 260–265. For more on the Russian army and the Jews during World War I, see E. Lohr, "Novye dokumenty o rossiiskoi armii i evreikh vo vremia Pervoi mirovoi voiny," *Vestnik Evreiskogo universiteta* 26, no.8 (2003): 245–268; S. Goldin, "Russkoe komandovanie i evrei vo vremia Pervoi Mirovoi voiny: prichiny formirovaniia negativnogo stereotipa," *Mirovoi krizis 1917–1920 godov i sud'ba vostochnoevropetskogo evreistva* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2005), pp. 29–46.
- 13 A. Shohat, "The Beginnings of Anti-Semitism in Independent Lithuania," *Yad Vashem Studies* 2 (1958), p. 9; A. Strazhas and D. Golan, "Yehudei lita u-medinijut germaniyah

- klapei 'admat oberost,'" *Mehkarim be-toldot am israel ve-eretz israel*, 4 (Haifa, 1978), pp. 311–314.
- 14 A. Strazhas and D. Golan, "Yehudei lita u-medinijut germaniyah klapei 'admat oberost,'" pp. 301–347; Tzviyah Balshan, "Maavakam shel yehudei lita al zekhuyotehem ha-leumiyot, 1917–1918," *Shvut* 10 (1984): 64–65.
 - 15 We are not questioning the statement that in separate stages of the war the Germans would grant greater support for any of the region's national groups, yet we would think that it is not enough to back the statement about a conscious attempt to put them into conflict.
 - 16 The circumstances of emergence of these documents were analyzed in great detail by Raimundas Lopata in "Lietuvos valstybingumo raida 1914–1918 metais," in *Lietuvių Atgimimo istorijos studijos*, vol. 9, (Vilnius: Mintis, 1996), pp. 67–83.
 - 17 A. Strazhas and D. Golan, "Yehudei lita u-medinijut germaniyah klapei 'admat oberost,'" p. 334.
 - 18 See also Š. Liekis, "On Jewish Participation in the Taryba in 1918," *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, vol. 4, 1999, p. 66; J. Tauber, "'No Allies': The Lithuanian Taryba and the National Minorities 1916–1918," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 4 (2007): 433–444.
 - 19 See Silber's and Bendikaitė's chapters in this volume, as well as the publication prepared by Šarūnas Liekis. See also A. Shohat, "The Beginnings of Anti-Semitism in Independent Lithuania," p. 748; Ts. Balshan, "Maavakam shel yehudei lita al zekhuyotehem ha-leumiyot, 1917–1918," 62–82; Š. Liekis, "On Jewish Participation in the Taryba in 1918," pp. 62–82; Š. Liekis, *A State within a State? Jewish autonomy in Lithuania 1918–1925* (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2003), pp. 61–79.
 - 20 In that meeting in Petrograd, the leading role was played by Naftali Fridman, who was elected to the Third and Fourth Russian Dumas in the Kaunas *gubernia*. It is possible that Lithuanian politicians also saw these regional differences. At the end of October 1917, while discussing the question of negotiations with the representatives of other nations, some members of the Lithuanian Council suggested addressing Ozer Finkelshtein and Naftali Fridman; *Lietuvos valstybės tarybos protokolai 1917–1918* [Minutes of the Lithuanian State Council], compiled by A. Eidintas and R. Lopata (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1991), pp. 346–347.
 - 21 Pr. Čepėnas, *Naujųjų laikų Lietuvos istorija*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Kazys Grinius Foundation, 1986), p. 226.
 - 22 A. Shohat, "The Beginnings of Anti-Semitism in Independent Lithuania," p. 36 (Shohat also mentions that the Vilnius Zionists were urged to join the Council by their anti-Polish views); A. Strazhas and D. Golan, "Yehudei lita u-medinijut germaniyah klapei 'admat oberost,'" pp. 343–344; Ts. Balshan, "Maavakam shel yehudei lita al zekhuyotehem ha-leumiyot, 1917–1918," p. 82.
 - 23 *Lietuvos valstybės tarybos protokolai 1917–1918*, pp. 346–347, 384; R. Lopata, "Lietuvos valstybingumo raida 1914–1918 metais" pp. 174–175; E. Gimžauskas, *Baltarusių veiksnys formuojantis Lietuvos valstybei 1915–1923* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2003), pp. 80–81.
 - 24 See the chapters by M. Silber and E. Bendikaitė. See also Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 75.
 - 25 O. Finkelshtein, "Paraleln," *Zum ondenken fun O. Finkelshtein* (Kaunas, 1938), p. 188.

- 26 See the chapters by Bendikaitė and Silber. See A. Strazhas and D. Golan, “Yehudei lita u-medinijut germaniyah klapei ‘admat oberost,’” p. 344; Ts. Balshan, “Maavakam shel yehudei lita al zekhuyotem ha-leumiyot, 1917–1918,” p. 81; Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* pp. 76–77. The question to which extent this decision reflected the general moods on the “Jewish street” is complicated and so far has not been addressed. For example, this is how an observer of that period, Römeris assessed the Jewish moods in Panevėžys environs in July 1919: “The Jews are opposed to the country’s [Lithuania’s] statehood even more than the Poles, but of course they keep it on the quiet, and in the eyes of the Lithuanian Nationalists they try to present themselves as ardent supporters of the Lithuanian state. . . . The Jews absolutely ignore the very fact of Lithuania’s statehood and consider it not serious, as if it were merely a result of turmoil and struggle with the Bolsheviks. I have noticed that very many Jews, probably even all of them, do not agree with Lithuania’s statehood. Oh, how the Jews long for Great Russia and hope for its restoration, watching with great interest the political events in the Baltic countries (Latvia and Estonia) and the campaigns of Kolchak’s environment demonstrating Russian imperialism. The idea of Lithuania is totally alien to the Jews. They lack even the slightest civic consciousness. Yet, the Lithuanians and their administration consider them, unlike the Poles, their allies. But it is only a fiction. The Jews are an anti-state element in Lithuania, no less dangerous to the Lithuanians than the Poles, who *per fas et nefas* [by any means] relate Lithuania with Poland.” M. Römeris, *Dienoraštis. 1919 m. birželio 21-oji–1920 m. kovo 15-oji* (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2009), p. 27.
- 27 *Lietuvos valstybės tarybos protokolai 1917–1918*, pp. 457–459, 463–464.
- 28 Incidentally, its author was the above-mentioned Shimshon Rosenboim. After long discussions and corrections, the entire Lithuanian delegation approved of the letter. Š. Liekis, *A State within State?* pp. 122–127.
- 29 Letter of the Lithuanian delegation to the Committee of the Jewish delegations at the Peace Conference, 5 August 1919, Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas, f. 383 ap.6, b.1, 1.1–2.
- 30 An example of that could be the pogrom caused by Polish soldiers in Vilnius in 1919.

Essays

LITHUANIAN JEWRY AND THE LITHUANIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

MORDECHAI ZALKIN

It is fascinating to note that there are virtually no references to the Lithuanian national movement or to the idea of the possible establishment of an independent Lithuanian state in the pre–World War I history of Lithuanian Jewry. In the wide range of contemporary Jewish press, literature, autobiographies, personal letters, communal documentation, rabbinical literature,¹ and public sermons, one can find just a handful of references, mostly of an indirect nature, to these two phenomena, which played a central role in the Lithuanian public discourse since the last quarter of the nineteenth century.² Even though it is understandable in the context of the sensitive political situation prevalent in the then Russian Czarist empire, the absence of Lithuanian national aspirations from the non-Russian Jewish press and literature is quite surprising.³ Likewise, the Lithuanian national movement was hardly discussed in the local Jewish press even during the 1920s and 1930s independent Lithuania, except for a few published essays and textbooks used in Jewish schools.⁴

Moreover, this chapter in the history of the Lithuanian nation is almost completely missing from the historiography of Lithuanian Jewry. The only few historians and Jewish publicists who paid attention to the attitude of the *Litvaks* (Lithuanian Jews) toward the Lithuanian national movement did not dedicate a thorough and a comprehensive discussion to this subject but limited themselves to general comments and unproved assumptions.⁵ Thus, for instance, Jacob Robinson, a well-known Jewish attorney and a supporter of the Lithuanian national aspirations, argued that “the vast majority of Lithuanian Jews identified themselves with the national aspirations of the Lithuanian majority, even prior to the establishment of the independent Lithuanian state.”⁶ Other historians argue that the cooperation between Jews and Lithuanians in the 1905 elections to the first Duma, and the political cooperation in post–World War I years,⁷ were, to a certain extent, an outcome of many *Litvaks’* support of the

Lithuanian national aspirations.⁸ This support was primarily based on practical and political considerations. In general, most historians of Lithuanian Jewry were not interested in the Lithuanian-Jewish relationships and in the *Litvaks*' attitude toward the Lithuanian national aspirations, and limited themselves either to other aspects of the local Jewish history⁹ or to the interwar period and the Jewish autonomy in independent Lithuania.¹⁰

Such "silence of sources" draws attention to a substantive distinction between the involvement of pre-World War I Lithuanian Jews in their immediate surrounding political arena, and that of their coreligionists in Poland, Hungary, and other Central and Eastern European states.¹¹ Apparently, this phenomenon is understandable, at least according to the popular assumption that the *Litvaks* limited their contact with the local Lithuanian society to a minimal, mainly in the economic sphere.¹² This dichotomy between the Jews and the local population—popular in the ultra-orthodox Jewish historiography—has very little to do with the historical reality, mainly due to the unique settling character of the *Litvaks*. Because of the general socio-economic conditions in the Lithuanian land, more than anywhere else in Europe the most prevalent type of Jewish settling in these territories was the rural one. Throughout centuries tens of thousands of *Litvaks* lived in farms, villages, and small towns in the Lithuanian countryside,¹³ and established different types of relationships with their neighboring non-Jewish Lithuanian farmers and villagers. It is true that this coexistence was characterized by religious and ethnic differences, as well as by mutual stereotypes of the "other," which was mostly negative.¹⁴ Yet one cannot underestimate the different forms of closeness, cooperation, mutual recognition and mutual influence between these two groups. A good example of this closeness is the unique occupational character of Lithuanian Jewry in general, and especially the proportionally high percentage of *Litvaks* who earned their living, directly or indirectly, by farming. By the end of the nineteenth century about six percent of the Jewish population in the Vilnius district and nine percent in the Suwałki district farmed grains and vegetables. Other Jewish farmers owned orchards or were occupied with lake fishing, dairy farming, and so on. Another ten percent of local Jews were owners of gristmills, exporters of agricultural products, suppliers of seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural machinery. One result of such extensive involvement of the Jews in agriculture and farming was close acquaintance with the local non-Jewish society, certainly beyond the basic economic needs. "Six hundred years, maybe even more, we live next to each other on the same small piece of land," wrote Juozas

Tumas-Vaižgantas, “we share the poor lands’ wealth . . . and the social closeness is unquestionable.”¹⁵ Thus, alongside the clear-cut ethnic and religious demarcation lines, many Lithuanians were well acquainted with the local Jews’ habits, beliefs, religious rituals,¹⁶ language,¹⁷ and daily routines.¹⁸ Simultaneously, the Jewish population had more than a vague image of the other’s world, as we learn from the memoirs of Morris Simcho Schulzinger, a native of the town of Seirijai:

Our relations with our non-Jewish neighbors were also amicable and mutually beneficial—we traded worldly goods to our mutual advantage and we were perfectly content to be left otherwise alone if the others would only consent. Relations with our non-Jewish neighbors were, although satisfactory, never too close. We bought everything they produced and sold them everything they needed. . . . Some of our people made their living traveling from farm to farm selling, buying, or bartering on the spot. Occasionally, the Goyim would bring their produce to town on odd or non-market days, usually in connection with the Jewish holidays. They would bring turkey for Pesach, chickens and roosters for Kapores on the eve of Yom Kippur, or s’chach for the Succah on the eve of Succoth.¹⁹

Ralph Jaffe recounts a similar experience in his memoirs: “At the end of the market-day farmers and peasants would relax by visiting certain Jewish homes to indulge in some vodka with herring and bread. Such houses were usually located close to the marketplace.”²⁰ The cited excerpts portray a fairly neutral state of affairs, but the picture painted by the Jewish pharmacist, journalist, and amateur historian David Mattityahu Lipman, indicates a much more positive perception of the Lithuanian people: “Lithuania, and particularly Žemaitija, was always known as an exemplary for its human attitude toward its Jews. In many aspects, life conditions here were much better for the Jews than in any other country. Jewish hatred was very rare here, unlike the anti-Jewish atmosphere that dominated the public sphere in Poland and the Ukraine. Even though from time to time the bright sky of Žemaitija was covered by gray clouds, especially during the years of the Czarist occupation, there is absolutely no reason to blame the tolerant Žemaitijos nation for that.”²¹

One might point to the subjective nature of this description, characterized by a high degree of idealization of the historical reality. Yet we cannot disregard this attitude solely due to its subjectivity, mainly because such attitude toward the Lithuanian population was not uncommon among local Jews. It is also possible to assume that due to the linguistic barriers many Jews were unfamiliar with their own collective negative image, widespread mainly among the uneducated segments of the local

non-Jewish society.²² However, despite the deep enrooting of these images and stereotypes, until World War II they rarely served as a platform of an anti-Jewish violation on a large scale. According to the historian Ezra Mendelsohn: “On the whole the Jews of Lithuanian-Belarusian lands probably had better relations with their non-Jewish neighbors than Jews did elsewhere in Russia. The Ukraine, along with Bessarabia, experienced the most infamous pogroms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while Lithuania was relatively free of such disturbances.”²³

Apparently, such state of affairs could encourage the Lithuanian Jews to express an interest in the national aspirations of their hosting society, and, to a certain extent, even to take an active part in its struggle for independence.

Passivity as a Strategy

The abstention of the *Litvaks* from expressing interest and from being involved in the struggle of the Lithuanian people for a national independence may be understood as the result of a historical experience of a minority frequently persecuted throughout centuries. In the exilic Jews’ consciousness any situation was considered to be of a temporary nature, which—according to the historical experience—might become disastrous in any given moment.²⁴ Centuries of life under the rule of the Polish nobility, followed by a relatively short but quite traumatic period as citizens of the Russian Czarist empire, further intensified this way of thought. Nonetheless, traditionally most Jews preferred the situation in which they could conduct their private, as well as public life in a given and a known framework and in a relative stable condition, to the uncertainty that accompanied any political, economic, and religious changes. This awareness, deeply rooted in the traditional self-consciousness of Eastern European Jews, was the main reason for the opposition of the Jewish orthodox circles to the Jewish Enlightenment as well as to the Zionist and the Bund movements.²⁵

Until World War I many *Litvaks* viewed their political situation, as well as their relationships with the surrounding society, in positive terms. Although living under the Russian Czarist rule, life in nineteenth-century “*Litvaks Land*” seemed to be secure and stable, especially considering that the pogroms that spread throughout wide areas of the empire since 1881, hardly affected their life. Therefore, assuming that they were well aware

of the national aspirations of certain circles of the Lithuanian society, and even supported these aspirations at the ideological level, they still had to consider the possible outcomes entailed with public support of this movement. Recognizing the sensitivity of the Czarist authorities to any type of a national awakening, and in light of the way Count Mikhail Muravyov suppressed the 1863 Polish insurrection in the Lithuanian provinces, a possible severe reaction against Jews who would express such a support was not unreasonable.²⁶

Moreover, this strategy of abstention from any public involvement in the Lithuanian national movement was also applicable to the feasibility of the fulfillment of the Lithuanians' national aspirations and the establishment of an independent Lithuanian state. From the Jewish point of view, despite the decent relationships with the Lithuanian people, no one could predict what would be the future attitude of the Lithuanian authorities toward the local Jewish population.²⁷ The possibility that this attitude would be affected by ultra nationalistic atmosphere, by the traditional popular negative image of the Jews and by political and economic interests that would not take into consideration the basic religious and economic interests of the Jewish citizens was far from being hypothetical. The Catholic Church, with which most Lithuanians affiliated, also did not contribute to a possible positive discourse between the two religious groups, due to its traditional hostility toward Jews and to the ultra nationalistic stance adopted by some of its leading figures. Thus, the most reasonable strategy that the Lithuanian Jews could adopt in order to preserve the status quo and to prevent any possible future unexpected agitations was the abstention from identifying with any national or political expressions, not to mention taking an active part in it.

Character and Image

As already mentioned, many Jews were familiar with the Lithuanian society, mainly with its variety of visible elements and characters, as well as its attitude toward the local Jews. Nonetheless, it seems that it was the general image of the Lithuanians as individuals, as well as an ethnic group, and mainly the cultural perspective of this image, that played a major role in the formation of the Jewish attitude toward the Lithuanian national movement. In this regard, the picture that arises from most contemporary written Jewish sources is of Lithuania as an organic and natural *Lebensraum*, and of the autochthonic Lithuanians as part of this natural

environment but not as a nation. Colorful descriptions of the Lithuanian countryside natural view are scattered all over contemporary Lithuanian-Jewish prose and poetry as it is expressed in the memoirs of Bernard Sachs of Kamai: "Nature, as it enfolded Kamai, reached its apotheosis for me with the cornfield on the outskirts of the village, adjacent to the Christian cemetery. For reasons that I find difficult to explain even now, this stretch of land held me spellbound by the magic which it diffused."²⁸

A typical perception of the Lithuanian farmer arises from the following paragraph, taken from a chapter of M. Z. Lavi's memoirs, describing pre-World War I Lithuania:

When a noble spirit swept the universe, I would run to the banks of Šešupė River, shined by the sunset beams, listening to the singing of the villagers. Their voices were wild, uncultured and uneducated, but the familiar field's smell floated on the melody mixed with the smell of the fruits of the earth. This was a melody of yearnings and longings, and I was wondering whether this was the voice of the tortured nation, the voice of the Lithuanians lamenting the loss of their freedom and longing for the times of Gediminas and Vytautas, or the voice of the individual, overwhelmed by his sorrow.²⁹

In his autobiography Uriah Katzenelenbogen, a *Litvak* who was captured by the magical spirit of the Lithuanian popular poetry and dedicated many years to the study and translations of Lithuanian *Dainas* into Yiddish and English, portrays in autochthonic colors the ethnic Lithuanians he first met in Vilna: "In my early youth [circa 1890], on a hot summer day in Vilnius, I saw in the street a group of Lithuanian pilgrims, many of them barefooted, their shoes hanging over their shoulders, their eyes enflamed and their faces sunburned; I followed them as they trod on towards the holies of Calvary beyond Vilnius."³⁰

A similar description can be found in the autobiography of Boris Schatz, born in 1866 Varniai, who became one of the most famous Jewish sculptors and the founder of the Bezalel Academy of Arts in Jerusalem. Schatz' unique observation of the surrounding real and human environments is well expressed in the way he portrays his Lithuanian neighbors: "The Christians from the nearby villages came every week on the market day, wearing garments made of sheep leather, big leather hats and simple straw sandals. They would offer their products with a very strange language that I did not understand and that sounded somewhat wild . . . they seemed to me like the Philistines, the Amalekites and some other half-wild tribes from time immemorial, that my ancient forefathers constantly struggled with."³¹

The use of the term “wild,” which in the Hebrew context also means “savage,” is not accidental. This savagely image of the ethnic Lithuanian peasants was matured not only as a result of their unusual external appearance, but also due to the unique language they spoke, which to the Jews’ ears sounded rather strange and even primitive. Moreover, since most *Litvaks* did not speak Lithuanian or Samogitian they were unfamiliar with the Lithuanian literature, such as Jonas Mačiulis’ [Maironis] “Jaunoji Lietuva,” or Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas’ “Pragiedruliai,” as well as with the Lithuanian poetry. Thus, the very phenomenon of the Samogitian literary movement was most likely unknown to them; therefore they were unaware of the subterranean cultural progression that took place in Samogitia during the 1820s and 1830s.³² It was only by the mid-1920s that the first translations of Lithuanian *Dainas* and literary works into Hebrew and Yiddish were published, exposing local Jews to the cultural aspect of the Lithuanian society.

The immanent connection, in the then-Jewish thought, between cultural progress and national revival is well expressed in the way N. Meltzen describes the process of the national revival in the Lithuanian society:

A group of inspired young people raised the flag of national awareness. However, since they could not use the printed literature as a platform of spreading their ideas, due to the Russian prohibition to print any book in Latin alphabet, they used a different strategy. Some of them established a wandering theater which wandered throughout the country and presented different plays mostly based on the history of the Lithuanian nation. This theatre became a stimulant of national revival which inflamed the national values among the entire nation. The vision turned into reality. The Lithuanian people were not ashamed any more with its language, and began to cherish its self identity. The ancient Lithuanian poems were again heard in countryside at sunset, as well as in holidays and festivals. It was a miracle: the dead nation came back to life. Few wandering actors saved the entire nation from degeneration and annihilation.³³

This is also the reason why the Lithuanian educational system was not considered by local Jews as an option for their children, even by those who lived in the countryside. Joseph Berger wrote: “Till World War I the Lithuanians who lived in the villages were mostly uneducated and uncultured, and therefore there was a clear-cut dichotomy between them and the local Jews”.³⁴ This image was further intensified due to the unique social structure of the ethnic Lithuanian society, composed mainly by a wide stratum of peasantry, a relatively small stratum of bourgeoisie, and a very tiny group of intelligentsia. Thus, unlike the situation in England, in

France, in Italy, or even in Poland, the Lithuanian society was not the type into which the modernist segments of the local Jewish society tended to be integrated.³⁵

In addition to the descriptions of the Lithuanian natural and human environments, Lavi's memoirs also include references to a possible national awakening among the Lithuanian people. However, the main question in the present context is whether, by the late nineteenth century, this group of "savages" was considered a cultured nation with the potential of executing its national rights and establishing and governing a modern state? In other words, did the Jews consider the Lithuanians a "real" nation? Rabbi Isaac Friedman, the rabbi of the Jewish community of Gargždai in the first decade of the twentieth century, discussed this matter in his writings: "A nation that desires to become free, to break the chains of subjugation, this nation is considered a member of the family of the enlightened nations. Its desire testifies to an inherent spirit of freedom, a collective pure soul that hates slavery and aspires for an independent national life. The desire for free life was always considered by the enlightened nations as the most superior one."³⁶

This probably explains why in discussing the 1831 and 1863 anti-Russian rebellions in local Jewish writings, the Lithuanians are not mentioned at all.³⁷

The long way the Lithuanian people had to undergo in order to become a "cultured nation," at least from the Jewish intellectual perspective, is also described by Lavi. Examining the nationalization process the Lithuanian people underwent through the former decades, he wrote in 1926 independent Lithuania: "Overnight the peasant was transformed into a person of a supreme culture."

This Jewish perception of Lithuania as a natural landscape and as the cradle of autochthonic Lithuanian culture, rather than the political realization of the national aspirations of the Lithuanian people, continued to play a central role in the interwar period. This attitude was widely expressed in the poetry published in 1920s independent Lithuania by young Lithuanian Jewish poets such as Jacob Gottlieb³⁸ and Lea Goldberg.³⁹ Likewise, articles of a similar type were published in local Hebrew periodicals such as *Petach*, *Netivot*, and *Olamenu*, followed by Hebrew translations of nature poems composed by the Lithuanian poets Liudas Gira⁴⁰ and Maironis,⁴¹ and in Hebrew and Yiddish translations of Lithuanian *Dainas*.⁴² This attitude also dominates the *Litvaks'* memoirist literature. The following paragraph, taken from the memoirs of Morris Schulzinger of Seirijai, is a typical example of this state of mind:

The winters were long and cold with frequent blizzards and huge snow drifts . . . Our summers, though relatively short, were most enjoyable because of the mild climate, the abundance of delicious fruits, the fragrance and heavenly scents of the country air, and the joy of bathing in the lake; but the short spring and fall brought us a fare of rain, mud and slush . . . the lake was about one hour walk from the village and was approached through lanes of sweet-smelling orchards and ripening fields. It was a pleasant, exhilarating walk . . . near the shore of the lake grew water lilies and other water plants in great abundance. There were also wide stretches of green algae. In the evening we were amused by the solo and choral singing of the crickets and the frogs, while in the distance across the lake there beckoned the strange, mysterious, and forbidden world of the Goyim.⁴³

The Lithuanian individual, mainly the one who lived in the rural area, was perceived by his Jewish neighbors as an integral part of the primordial naturalistic landscape, and was described mainly as a “Noble savage,” a description dominated by romantic elements. This perception is prevalent in most contemporary Lithuanian Jewish memoirs, literature, and poetry.⁴⁴ The following lines, published by the editor of the Hebrew newspaper *Hazfira* in 1918, exemplify the sense of supremacy widespread among some circles of the Lithuanian Jewish society toward the local non-Jewish population of the newly created Eastern European states: “The Jewish masses, residing in those countries, are characterized by much higher intellectual, spiritual and moral degrees than these states’ non-Jewish residents.”⁴⁵ As a matter of fact, in the worldview of the *Litvaks* the image of the local gentile was of the “Ultimate Other,” the one where the “Otherness” is inherent in his very essence, and therefore it is permanent. Paradoxically, in the Lithuanian cultural context, the Jew “placed” his non-Jewish neighbor in the same place designated for the Jew himself in medieval Europe, in the words of Bernard Sachs: “Like the pagans of old, the despised Lithuanians stood outside the Chosen People.”⁴⁶

Thus, for most *Litvaks* the common image of the Lithuanian as an individual, as well as the Lithuanians as an ethnic group was of a primitive society composed mainly of peasants, whose cultural horizons do not cross the boundaries of the local village.⁴⁷ This perception of the Lithuanian people has to be understood not only as part of the local Lithuanian context, but also in a wider ethnic-cultural context. Due to historical, political, cultural, and economic circumstances, the natural reference-groups of most *Litvaks* were not the native Lithuanians, but ethnic-national groups of more developed cultures, such as the Poles, the Germans, and the Russians. Moreover, thousands of Lithuanian Jews have been educated in Polish and Russian schools since mid-nineteenth century, and

became adherents of these cultures. Against this background, it is only natural that the image of the local native people was formed in the Jewish consciousness, by a constant—albeit unconscious—comparison to these fundamental different cultural systems. This is also the reason why the phenomenon of cultural assimilation, so prevalent among Polish and German Jews since the early 1800s, was almost unknown among the *Litvaks*.⁴⁸ In the light of this, and due to the anti-Jewish attitudes of some prominent Lithuanian intellectual figures, such as Bishop Motiejus Valančius and Vincas Kudirka, we cannot indicate a real and significant discourse between Lithuanian and local Jewish intellectuals, which could lead to a more substantial and mutual recognition and understanding, as well as to the exchange of ideas regarding Lithuanian national aspirations.

The Economic Context

Another perspective that had a crucial effect on the formation of the *Litvaks*' attitude toward the Lithuanians' national aspirations was economics. In the unique economic and occupational structure prevalent in Lithuania, where the local non-Jews were mostly peasants, the Jew played a central economic role in several fields, mainly in trade.⁴⁹ Moreover, an analysis of the occupational profile of late nineteenth-century Jewish society in the Lithuanian countryside indicates their dominance of some other fields, including transportation,⁵⁰ crafts,⁵¹ food and beverage trade,⁵² finance,⁵³ medicine,⁵⁴ and petty industry.⁵⁵ This reality resulted from historical, political, cultural, and religious circumstances rooted in medieval Europe, as well as in the Russian Czarist economic policy.⁵⁶ Apparently, this occupational division, in which both sides were economically dependent on each other, undoubtedly contributed to the relative high level of tolerance the Jews enjoyed in the Lithuanian countryside, as well as to their understandable wish to preserve this situation. However, the eminent spokesmen of the Lithuanian national movement repeatedly emphasized the necessity of a fundamental change in the occupational profile of the Lithuanian society as a precondition for any possible political progress. In this context they preached the need to transfer traditional "Jewish occupations" into Lithuanians hands.⁵⁷ The anti-Jewish rhetoric, which focused on the inherent damage the rural population was experiencing from the constant economic encounters with the Jews, and the need to change this situation by pushing the Jews out, was very common in the nationalistic-oriented Lithuanian press in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.⁵⁸ It

is most probable that local Jews, who were well aware of these demands, considered the possible realization of this ideology as an immediate endangerment to their very existence in this environment. The extent to which this concern was realistic is evident from an article published in 1890 in the Lithuanian newspaper *Varpas*.⁵⁹ The author of the article proudly announces that as a result of the significant decrease of alcohol consumption by local Lithuanian peasants, the Jewish owner of the local “Karčema” (Public house) had to leave the village. A typical expression of the way the Jews analyzed this tendency is found in a sermon of Rabbi Isaac Friedman of Gargždai:

In these countries the Jews are tolerated, but no one loves them. The dominant people consider the Jew as a second-class citizen who acquires his very right to reside in a country by his contribution to the local economy, and not due to his basic right to live anywhere as a free human being. Repeatedly we hear the argument that the Jew exploits the local population, sucks the people’s blood as a leech. The only difference between those who are in favor of the Jews and those who are against, is that the former argue that our success results not from our cunning and deceptive character, but due to our unique commercial capabilities.⁶⁰

In fact, the intensive anti-Jewish tendency within the Lithuanian National Movement with regard to the economic perspective did cause a substantial damage to some segments of the local Jewish population.⁶¹ Therefore, this tendency, although its outcomes were limited, did not encourage a Jewish support for the national aspirations of the Lithuanian people. Moreover, from the Jewish point of view one possible result of a future establishment of an independent Lithuanian state could have been the realization of this ideology, which could cause a significant deterioration in the economic condition of the state’s Jews. The ongoing economic and occupational discrimination of the Jews in the 1930s independent Lithuania prove that these early concerns were not baseless.⁶²

The Political Context

It is plausible to assume that the lack of the Lithuanian Jews’ public support for the Lithuanian National Movement was also the result of political motives. These motives have to be analyzed in three different contexts.

The Jewish-Russian Context

Unlike the prevalent image, despite the internal deterioration of the might and the governing ability of the Russian central authorities at the turn of the nineteenth century, only a small number of Jews participated in anti-Russian political activities. Thus, the total number of the members of the Bund—the biggest Jewish socialistic movement in imperial Russia—never exceeded 30,000, less than one percent of the total Jewish population in the pre-World War I Russian empire.⁶³ Besides the traditional Jewish abstention from any active political involvement, the presumption prevalent in the “Jewish Street”—Jewish public arena—in Lithuania was that the very existence of the Jews and their well-being is more secure in the framework of multinational empires than as a minority group in a one-nation state ruled by a homogenous ethnic and religious majority group.⁶⁴ Rabbi Abraham Kahana-Shapira, who served as a communal rabbi in several Lithuanian Jewish communities from 1896 until the Holocaust, supports this hypothesis: “Even though we enjoy civil rights in different countries, we should remember that in fact in most cases the only sphere these equal rights are implemented in is the economic one. More than hundred years passed since equal rights were granted to our French brethren and we realized that we can enjoy, at least few of these rights, only in states where the Jews are a very small minority.”⁶⁵

Moreover, in an article published in 1918 in the Hebrew newspaper *Hazfira* the editor expressed a concern with regard to the possible changes that might take place in the civil and economic situation of the Jews in post-World War I new nation-based nation states: “These nations are very much inexperienced. None of us knows their way of governing, no one is really well aware of their unique characters, and suddenly they govern their new states in which many Jews reside. This new situation will be accompanied by a renaissance of the historical narratives as well as by the revival of these nations’ historical heroes. But for the Jews the only meaning of these narratives and heroes is the memory of pogroms and massacres, of heroes who slaughtered the Jews.”⁶⁶

One should also remember that throughout the nineteenth century the vast majority of European Jews lived in multinational and multiethnic empires (Russia, Austro-Hungary, Britain, and Germany). This reality was perceived, consciously and sub-consciously as normative, while the very idea of living in a nation-based state seemed by many as strange and even dangerous situation to any minority group. Against this background the editor of the Jewish newspaper *Peterburg Togblat* wrote: “many Jews

preferred a new strong and big Jewish center in free Russia.” Finally, for many Jews the idea of a successful Lithuanian uprising against the Russian empire seemed imaginary, especially in the light of the failure of the two Polish rebellions in which Jews were involved, directly or indirectly.⁶⁷

The Jewish-Polish Context

The long Jewish-Polish co-existence had a crucial impact on most aspects of the pre–World War I Lithuanian Jewish consciousness. During hundreds of years of Jewish existence in Polish territories, unique relationships were developed between the Jewish population and different segments of the Polish society. “Isolation,” wrote historian Alina Czaa about the Polish-Jewish co-existence among the middle class and the lower social strata, “was not complete. Mutual diffusion and adaptation of many cultural elements did take place . . . the Jews accepted many folkloristic elements and even Slavic vocabulary and passed on a great deal in the field of material culture.”⁶⁸ As far as the relationships of the Jews and the Polish nobility are concerned, the mutual economic dependence of these two groups led to a close and intensive mutual recognition.⁶⁹ Thus, many Jews, mainly among the Jewish bourgeoisie in the urban environments, were familiar with the Polish language as well as literature and arts.⁷⁰ As a result, since the second half of the nineteenth century, we witness the emergence of Jewish schools, literature, press and theatres in the Polish language.⁷¹ For the Jews who took part in these processes the Polish culture played a focal role in the formation of their new cultural and political identity, and contributed to the formation of a positive attitude toward the political aspirations of the Polish people. In this context one has to view the support of, and the active role many *Litvaks* played in the nineteenth-century Polish rebellions against Russian rule.⁷²

The second dimension of this context is the unique ethno-demographic structure in the Lithuanian region. Ethnic Polish inhabitants constituted a proportionally large part of the entire population of Lithuania, mainly in the Vilnius area and in cities such as Suwałki and Białystok. Despite traditional tensions between the two groups, they shared many economic interests. A fundamental change in the political situation and the establishment of an independent Lithuanian state could undoubtedly affect the local socio-economic structure, mainly by the appearance of a new Lithuanian bourgeoisie at the cost of the former two, that is, Poles and Jews.

Moreover, many *Litvaks* were well aware of the Polish context of the Lithuanian struggle for a national independence, for instance in the religious as well as the socio-political spheres.⁷³ Although the Jews were not, at least officially, an active side in this bi-national struggle, many sources indicate their pro-Polish tendency. In this regard, the accusations of the Jews in the Lithuanian press as supporters of the Polish side were not baseless.⁷⁴ Consequently, at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the collapse of the Russian empire was not just a hypothetical dream, the first priority of many Jews—at least in the cultural context—was the possibility of reunification with Polish society.

The Jewish-Lithuanian Context

A central motive in the process of the Lithuanian struggle for national and political independence was to emphasize the unique characters of Lithuanian ethnicity. The anti-Jewish rhetoric used as part of this process by the leaders of the Lithuanian National Movement,⁷⁵ periodically accompanied by different types of anti-Jewish violence,⁷⁶ did not encourage political Jewish support in the movements' aspirations. Another aspect that has to be discussed in the political context is the question to what extent the Jews considered themselves a separate ethnic group in the framework of a Lithuanian national state. One must remember that these Jews, who were an integral part of those who belonged to the group known as *Litvaks*, lived mostly in non-Lithuanian environments, such as Belarus and northeastern Poland. In the then Jewish east-European sub-division, all these Jews were considered as sharing the same unique characters, different from the Polish and Galician Jews.⁷⁷ This common identity was expressed by family connections, unique ritual manners, and high degree of intellectual tendency. From their point of view—though officially living within the boundaries of the Russian empire—in the religious, social, and cultural context they lived in a half-imaginary *Litvakland*. The entire area of Lithuania, Belarus, and northeastern Poland was their country, though an imaginary one. They had no cultural, social, or political reason to support the Lithuanians' national aspirations that could have led to a possible division of *Litvakland* into different ethnic and political parts.⁷⁸ Finally, it is reasonable to assume that the small "political potential" of the local Jewish society was directed toward both Zionism, and to a lesser extent, socialist ideology.⁷⁹ Since orthodox Jewish circles were hardly involved in any political activities, almost no political group was left to support the Lithuanian National Movement.

The Internal Jewish Discourse

The common denominator of the different ideological, cultural, economic, and political perspectives is their external Jewish context. However, there is another factor, intra-Jewish by its nature, which could contribute to the current discussion. The preliminary presumption is that the process of the development of the Lithuanian national awakening and the establishment of the Lithuanian National Movement would necessarily affect the internal discourse of any ethnic and religious minority that lived in this environment. However, the interest of any minority group in political and social processes taking place in the surrounding society, not to mention showing an active involvement in these processes, may arise either when these processes have a direct or indirect effect on the minority group, or when this group is ready to get involved. In this case these two preconditions did not exist. The Lithuanian Jews did not consider the Lithuanian people as capable, politically and culturally, of promoting a significant political process that would force the Czarist government to consider the option of an independent Lithuanian state. In intellectual Jewish circles, the very concept of Lithuanian nationalism was considered a subject discussed in small narrow elitist and religious Lithuanian strata and not as a deep and widespread process that might have any significant implications on the future of the Lithuanian Jews. Nonetheless, it seems that the absence of the second condition is even more significant. The very process of the development and formation of the Lithuanian National Movement took place during one of the stormiest periods in the history of East European Jewry. They witnessed several unprecedented processes, including large-scale pogroms; the emigration of millions to America, South Africa, and Palestine; secularism; the emergence of the Zionist Movement; the involvement of thousands of young Jews in the socialist movements; World War I and the expulsion of thousands of Jews from Lithuanian areas. These processes occupied the attention of most Jews as it is reflected in contemporary Jewish literature and press. Each sub-group of the Jewish society was looking for the best means it could find to ensure its future. In such a situation thinking of, not to mention taking an active part, in the Lithuanian National Movement, was a luxury. This is also the main reason why the local Jewish press, from the Orthodox-oriented to radical left-wing newspapers, was hardly interested in Lithuania in general, as well as in the local political processes in particular. The Jewish collective consciousness and the Jewish press were preoccupied with the pogroms that were taking place in different Russian towns. Most Jewish newspa-

pers did not report an even more significant event—the declaration of the independence of Lithuania in February 1918.⁸⁰ What seemed to be historical and crucial processes for the present and the future of the Lithuanian nation was considered marginal by most Jews. There were a few exceptions, such as the collection of articles, *Lita* published in 1914, which adopted a clear pro-Lithuanian attitude. But for the most part, Lithuania in general and the Lithuanian National Movement in particular were outside the East European public Jewish discourse until the mid-1920s.

The Post–World War I Context

Jewish public discussion and writings concerning the Lithuanian national aspirations appeared only after World War I, the collapse of the Czarist regime, and the formation of a new political order in Europe.⁸¹ Nonetheless, during the first years of independent Lithuania the local Jewish press and public discourse were still very much preoccupied with internal Jewish subjects, as well as with questions such as Jewish autonomy and the Seimas' (the Lithuanian Parliament) regulations with regard to Jewish commerce.⁸² Yet the radical Polish nationalism as well as the positive attitude toward the Jews expressed by Lithuanian political circles, contributed to the growing interest of many Jews in different aspects of the Lithuanian nation. Thus we find increasing public Jewish expressions regarding the right of the Lithuanians for an independent state. Some Jews even took an active part in the Lithuanian war of independence.⁸³ "We cannot ignore anymore our neighbors who make a significant progress toward national and political independence," wrote Jacob Goldschmidt in 1919. "It is our duty to study their language, and to be involved in every aspect of the state's life."⁸⁴ The narrative of contemporary Yiddish and Hebrew writings shows an open support of the idea of Lithuanian national renaissance,⁸⁵ as well as a tendency to portray the two nations' relationships in an ideal perspective.⁸⁶ Lidski, Robinson, and Garfunkel argue that Jews took an active part in the Lithuanian National Movement and struggle for independence even prior to World War I.⁸⁷ However, none of these scholars provide any proof to support this argument.

Lithuanian Jews "discovered" Lithuanian culture and national aspirations during the 1920s. At that time these subjects were discussed thoroughly in the newly established Hebrew periodicals such as *Petach*, *Netivot*, and *Olamenu*,⁸⁸ as well as in several books that concentrated on Lithuanian poetry, literature, and mythology.⁸⁹ The Lithuanian language

was studied by thousands of Jewish students all over Lithuania.⁹⁰ They also studied Lithuanian literature and poetry.⁹¹ Translation of Lithuanian poems and stories was quite popular among young Jewish poets and authors.⁹² However, it seems as if this tendency did not cross the cultural demarcation lines. The support of most local Jews of the Jewish autonomy and the ministry of Jewish affairs, both unique Lithuanian phenomena in interwar Europe, represents the limited intention of contemporary Lithuanian Jews in real integration in the new state. This tendency was also derived from the disbelief of many Lithuanian Jews in the willingness of the modern nation-based state to grant full civil rights to its Jewish citizens. These feelings were widely expressed in the public Jewish discourse, mainly in regard to the idea of autonomy, as Rabbi Judah Zaks wrote in 1928: “We must realize that being a citizen does not mean completely adopting the state’s national values like all non-Jewish citizens. You should never suspect a Jew for such a tendency. Everyone knows that we live in exile and the very idea of having full citizenship and living quietly and peacefully is not conceivable.”⁹³

The immanent tension between the Lithuanian aspirations for a national independence and the Jewish concern about possible implications of this state of affairs for the future of the Lithuanian Jewry was well expressed by Shemu`el Leib Zitron in February 1918:

The historical way the Jews should adopt from now on should be entirely Jewish and totally independent, according to its unique goals. We are pushed toward this way, based on values such as honesty and democracy, due to our unique way of life and needs. We should direct our activities toward our Jewish goals, primarily to defend the national Jewish individuality and the realization of our collective national rights. This way will also guarantee the fulfillment of the individual Jew’s civil rights. We have to join the new history of Lithuania on the basis of common friendship.⁹⁴

These words reflect the Lithuanian Jewish attitude toward the new Lithuanian state and their willingness to absorb the national elements inherent in the new political situation—a limited partnership accompanied by preserving their Jewish identity and interests, not only in the cultural and the religious realms, but also in the civil one.

NOTES

- 1 A typical example is *Nezakh Israel*, a collection of essays published in 1914 by Rabbi Eliyahu Feivelsohn, the rabbi of the Jewish community of Kupiškis. In these essays Rabbi Feivelsohn discusses a wide range of relevant religious, social, and educational subjects. The Lithuanian case, however, is not mentioned at all. See E. M. Feivelsohn, *Nezakh Israel* (Warsaw: 1914).
- 2 J. Goldschmidt, "Lithuania and the Lithuanians," *Lite*, 1914, vol. I., pp. 14–38.
- 3 For instance, the only report from Lithuania in the Warsaw-based Hebrew newspaper *Ha-tzfirah* during February 1918—the month Lithuania declared its independence—was about Zionist events that took place in the Grodno region.
- 4 See N. Meltzen, "On the Potter's Wheel," *Hed Lita*, 1924, vol. I., no. 4, pp. 6–7; J. Livšinas, *Lietuvių tautos nuotikiai: vadovėlis žydų pradžios mokyklai ir žemesnėms gimnazijos klasėms* (Kaunas: Ptašeko knygynas, 1927), pp. 55–57.
- 5 See, for example, U. Katzenelenbogen, *The Daina* (Chicago: Latvian News Publishing Company, 1935), p. xi.
- 6 J. Robinson, "The Jews of Independent Lithuania in Historical and Comparative Perspective," in J. Oleiski, et al., eds., *Lithuanian Jewry*, vol. 2 (Tel-Aviv: Am Hasefer, 1972), p. 26; L. Garfunkel, *The Destruction of Kovno's Jewry* (Jerusalem: Yad. Vashem, 1959) p. 17; N. Lidskis, *Lietuvos istorija* (Kaunas, 1923), p. 54; A. Eidintas, *Jews, Lithuanians and the Holocaust* (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2003), p. 94.
- 7 A. Eidintas, *Jews, Lithuanians and the Holocaust*, pp. 63–76; E. Bendikaitė, "Dvi ideologijos—vienas judejimas: sionistinis socializmas nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje," *Lietuvos žydai* (Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto leidykla, 2003), p. 92–95.
- 8 A. Eidintas, *Jews, Lithuanians and the Holocaust*, p. 39; E. Bendikaitė, "Dvi ideologijos," pp. 90–92; E. Bendikaitė, "Expressions of Litvak Pro-Lithuanian Political Orientation c.1906–c.1921," in A. Nikžentaitis, et al., eds., *The Vanished World of Lithuanian Jewry* (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi B. V., 2004), pp. 89–107.
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COLLABORATION OF LITHUANIANS AND JEWS DURING THE ELECTIONS TO THE FIRST AND THE SECOND DUMAS

DARIUS STALIŪNAS

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century the nature of political activity was undergoing transformations on the western borderlands of the Russian empire. Specifically, elitist methods were replaced by mass politics; in other words, political parties that not only claimed to represent wide layers of the population, but also depended on mass support in the success of their activity entered the political scene. These political organizations were differentiated not only on the ideological, but also on the national basis. The latter principle is predominant in the period under discussion, which can be illustrated by the paradoxes of the influence of the Russian party of liberal inclination—the Constitutional Democrats (Kadets)—on the western fringes of the empire. On the one hand, many non-Russian political parties declared their support for the Kadets' political program and led negotiations with the leaders of that party.¹ On the other hand, in these territories, departments of the Kadet party were established on the national basis, that is the Poles who supported the Kadets' program organized themselves separately from a group of Jewish Kadets, which constituted the largest support of that party in Lithuania.² Moreover, the mutual hostility of Jews and Poles belonging to the Kadet party was not lesser than that which existed between political opponents belonging to ideologically radically different parties.³ It was only for the left-wing parties that the national question was less important, sometimes even insignificant; thus it is not surprising that national organizations of that trend found it easier to cooperate.

However, in the final stages of the existence of the Russian empire, there were certain situations when political groups seeking to represent various national groups were impelled to collaborate. One of such situations was the elections to the Russian Dumas. In most of the cases at the

electors' meetings in the *gubernias*, not a single social or national group⁴ had the majority.⁵ It was in this context that the collaboration of political forces representing Lithuanian and Jewish interests took place.⁶

This chapter establishes the circumstances and reasons that impelled the Lithuanian and Jewish political parties to cooperate during the elections to the First and the Second Russian Dumas. The chapter focuses on the Lithuanian-Jewish relations, and also addresses the formation of various election blocs, which can be explained only in view of the general constellation of national relations. The elections to the first two Dumas are included because they took place during the 1905 revolution,⁷ and because the left-wing parties boycotted the elections to the First Duma, but they already actively participated in the second elections.

This topic has received some attention in historiography, but historians concentrate their attention on either Lithuanians or Jews. In addition, there have been no attempts to disclose the motives of both sides in forming this union.⁸ In the assessments of this collaboration, two tendencies become distinct. The first emphasizes the casual or instrumental nature of agreements between Lithuanians and Jews during the elections to the Dumas,⁹ while the other asserts that these agreements were a reflection of the growing realization of common interests.¹⁰

Elections to the First Russian Duma

The revolution of 1905 and the building of the quasi-parliamentary political system in the Romanov empire considerably accelerated the processes of formation of mass parties that began at the end of the nineteenth century. During this period, the structure of Jewish political parties also underwent a marked evolution. Before the revolution the "Jewish street" became dominated by the Bund (the General Jewish Labor Bund of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia in Yidish – *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poyln un Rusland*), many new organizations formed, including the Zionist Socialists, the Jewish Social Democratic Workers' Party "Poalei Zion," and the Jewish Socialist Workers' Party.¹¹ When the left-wing Jewish parties boycotted the elections to the First Duma, the only real political power on the "Jewish street" remained the Union for the Equal Rights of Jews in Russia (hereinafter, the Union), established in March 1905, which rallied the Jewish Liberals and the Zionists at the urge of the left-wing parties.¹² This organization began to prepare for the elections in August 1905, after the announcement of the elections to the so-

called Bulygin Duma. The Union's Central Bureau not only paved the way for the mobilization of Jews during the elections, but also collected information about the political views of other electoral groups, as well as their views on Jews.¹³ The Union's branches were established in the centers of not only *gubernias*, but also districts (e.g., in the Kaunas *gubernia*, Panevėžys, Ukmergė [Vilkomir], Zarasai [Novo-Aleksandrovsk], and Raseiniai). These departments were responsible for compiling the lists of Jews having the right to vote, as well as spreading information on the elections and agitation. The Union's departments even assigned funds to cover travel expenses of Jews from small towns coming to the elections.¹⁴

Like other left-wing parties that operated in the Russian empire, one of the strongest Lithuanian political organizations of that time—the Lithuanian Social Democratic party (Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija, LSDP)—boycotted the elections to the First Duma. Attempts to form a Christian Democratic Party were not successful at that time,¹⁵ thus the strongest positions in the election process were held by the right-wing parties, above all by the Lithuanian National Democratic Party (Tautiškoji lietuvių demokratų partija, LNDP) formed at the end of 1905.¹⁶ Among the politicians who founded that party were several members of the Lithuanian Democratic Party (Lietuvių [Lietuvos] demokratų partija; LDP). Despite the fact that this party apparently boycotted the elections, its right-wing members not only founded another party (LNDP), but also actively participated in the elections. It was the LNDP that had the largest influence among Lithuanians during the elections to the First Duma in the Kaunas *gubernia*, where Lithuanians expected to elect the most deputies, while the LDP and the LSDP had a large influence in the Suwałki *gubernia*, where only two Duma members were elected.

Kaunas Gubernia

In the election meeting of the Kaunas *gubernia*, which assembled to elect representatives to the Duma, not a single social (national) group could expect to have the absolute majority, as peasants elected thirty-nine, landowners—thirty-five, and burghers sixteen electors. Thus, as the order of elections was announced, it became clear that in the election meeting of the *gubernia* coalitions were inevitable. However, representatives of different curias had begun to negotiate much earlier, that is at the time when the electors who had to go to the *gubernia*'s election meeting were elected.

Initial Stage of Election Campaign With Lithuanian left-wing parties boycotting the elections, and the LNDP having just started its activity, there was not a single political force to lead the election process in the rural areas of the Kaunas *gubernia*. In the meantime, the LNDP tried to influence the course of elections in the cities, above all in Kaunas. However, both in Kaunas and the *gubernia*'s smaller towns Jews were predominant among voters, and the Union very actively tried to influence their behavior.¹⁷

According to the available information, Jews were the first to offer negotiations to Lithuanians; both then and later they clearly declared their intention to make negotiations exclusively with Lithuanian "Democrats."¹⁸ The Union's Kaunas department had agreed with the right-wing Lithuanian politicians that two of seven electors' seats in the city of Kaunas would go to Lithuanians, and later, while electing representatives to the Duma, a coalition would be formed, and five Lithuanians and one Jew would be elected to the Duma. However, Jews did not stick to this agreement, and only Jews became electors in the city of Kaunas. According to the version of an active participant in the elections, one of the leaders of the Lithuanian national movement Jonas Basanavičius, Jews began to doubt the ability of Lithuanian political leaders to unite and act unanimously, and tried to negotiate for better conditions—two instead of one deputy in the Duma, which was already unacceptable for the LNDP.¹⁹

In order to understand the Union's position on this case, we need to look at its situation and the election forecasts. In the fall of 1905, some of the Union's activists in the Kaunas *gubernia* predicted that Jews could expect only ten of sixteen seats of electors delegated by cities to the *gubernia*'s election meeting. Such pessimistic forecasts were prompted by the tactic of boycotting the elections of the Bundists and other left-wing Jewish parties.²⁰ Were a union with Lithuanians concluded, the number of Jewish electors in the *gubernia*'s election meeting would have decreased; accordingly, their electoral positions would have weakened. Besides, the Union's leaders doubted the ability of Lithuanian politicians to influence peasants. The LNDP was a new party without a strong infrastructure, thus the doubts about its influence on peasant electors were rather grounded.²¹ In other words, if, for example, Lithuanian Clericalists rather than the LNDP had a larger influence on Lithuanians at the *gubernia*'s election meeting, the former agreement with the Jews would have turned out useless. Finally, it was feared that such a union would arouse dissatisfaction of the Poles.²² Similar arguments became an obstacle for forming a bloc in Šiauliai, where the Jewish election committee at first intended to support

the candidacy of Count Zubov, but when the latter refused to be a candidate, Jews did not support anyone else among Christians.²³

Basanavičius did not find this position of the Jews on the election of electors in the city of Kaunas respectable or tolerable. "It turned out that the Jews remained an alien nation for us just as they were before, which lives amongst us exclusively off profiteering and exploitation, and apparently does not have anything in common with the country in which they live."²⁴

Negotiations before the Election Meeting of the Gubernia The analysis of the *gubernia*'s elections (22–26 March 1906) should be begun from the fact that as soon as the Lithuanian electors arrived in Kaunas, they were taken under the wing of the LNDP. The latter had achieved that the negotiations take place not among different curias *in corpore*, but among their delegated representatives. Not only the few electors, but also the leaders of the LNDP—Jonas Basanavičius, Povilas Januševičius, and Pranas Klimaitis—stood for the Lithuanian position. Lithuanian politicians correctly predicted that if the representatives of the landowners' curia were allowed to directly communicate with peasant electors, the latter could yield to their influence, all the more for the fact that the landowners expected support from priests.²⁵ As no other Lithuanian parties participated in the elections, the LNDP could keep a tight rein on the negotiations.²⁶

For the landowners' curia, a union with peasants rather than Jews²⁷ would have been more acceptable not only because of their judophobia,²⁸ but also because of their confessional links with peasants and the belief that it would not be difficult to influence Lithuanians with the help of the priests.²⁹ After the elections, the *krajowcy*³⁰ newspaper *Gazeta Wileńska* criticized the landowners of the Kaunas *gubernia* exactly because they did not want to follow the democratic principles and recognize the rightful requirements of Lithuanians.³¹

It is not easy to describe the standpoint of the Union's members, as they held different views on possible election blocs, as well as on landowners and peasants in general. In the fall of 1905, some members of the Union gave priority to agreements with landowners, as these were "more compliant, cultured, and better organized" than peasants; besides, in some localities, such as Raseiniai, they were the first to show the initiative to make agreements.³² In the meantime, peasants were often considered uncivilized and easily yielding to the influence of the local authorities or landowners,³³ in other words, they should not be regarded as an independent political force. However, certain members of the Union treated

Lithuanians as a possible ally. For example, M. Katsenelenbogen from Ukmergė was of the opinion that Lithuanians changed greatly: if before their sole national value was their language, now their national self-consciousness was greatly consolidated, and their conflict with the Poles became sharp. In Katsenelenbogen's opinion, this conflict was not only cultural, but also social. The antagonism against the Poles created favorable conditions for a union of Lithuanian peasants and the Jewish proletariat, and left no doubts that Lithuanians would not vote for landowners. Among the Poles the conservative-clerical elements were predominant.³⁴ Thus, some members of the Union thought that Lithuanians were the partners with whom Jews should join forces.

However, Katsenelenbogen's opinion was that of a minority. The Jewish electors who assembled on 23 March 1906 together with representatives of the election committees decided that the best solution would be for all three curias to reach an agreement, and for the *gubernia*'s three largest national groups—Poles, Lithuanians, and Jews—to have their representatives in the Duma.³⁵ Thus one can say that none of the alternatives discussed inside the Union (to make an agreement either with the Poles or the Lithuanians) won, but a compromise solution was adopted.

However, as not only the leaders of the LNDP, but also a broader strata of Lithuanian society knew about the above-mentioned outcome of the Lithuanian-Jewish agreement in the city of Kaunas, it comes as no surprise that at the election meeting of the Kaunas *gubernia* the Lithuanians were not inclined to negotiate with the Jews.³⁶ Overall, some Lithuanian electors considered Jews a less acceptable ally than Lithuanian landowners, which is revealed by the mandates received by some electors³⁷ and the discussions at the pre-election meetings in Kaunas. In these discussions, not only were Jews reproached for the failure to stick to the agreement during the elections in cities, but also the traditionally important role of Jews as peasant exploiters was recalled (“they sucked all honey,” “leeches”). A member of the LNDP Kazimieras Samajauckas went as far as to state that a bloc with Jews would discredit Lithuanian electors “in the eyes of the people.” Samajauckas was not the only one in the LNDP who opposed the formation of a bloc with Jews. For example, in 1906, the newspaper *Vilniaus žinios*, which was closely related to the LNDP, published several articles, in which different political aims of Lithuanians and Jews were delineated.³⁸ There was a clear realization among Lithuanian politicians that the aim of the Lithuanians to receive territorial autonomy in the ethnographic limits was principally disadvantageous for the Jews seeking personal autonomy in the Russian empire: “Jews are not con-

cerned about the autonomy of separate countries, says their compatriot, Mr. Levin, and we should fully believe this statement. If the state is divided into several autonomous provinces, in separate regions, in addition to the general laws, additional local laws prompted by their individual needs would come into force.”³⁹

Unsuccessful Polish-Lithuanian Negotiations Despite the wish of the majority of peasant electors to form a bloc with the landowners’ curia, which was confirmed by voting, negotiations with the representatives of this curia were unsuccessful. The main reason was the conditions formulated on the initiative of Basanavičius, which the landowners’ curia had to accept in order to enter into an election bloc. The landowners not only had to form a common parliamentary faction with Lithuanians in Duma, to follow “constitutional-democratic” principles but most important, to seek Lithuania’s autonomy in its ethnographic territory. Part of the landowners might have agreed with the idea of Lithuania’s autonomy, but by no means in its ethnographic territory. According to the Lithuanian variant, the Poles would have received the status of a national minority at best, while Lithuania’s political autonomy in the limits of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania might have helped the Poles to retain the dominant status. Besides the Lithuanians sought that the landowners’ candidates should be discussed with them; however, the Poles did not agree with that and even demanded a different distribution of seats, leaving for Lithuanian peasants only three seats (two considering that one was for a priest). In one of the published versions of the negotiations, whose author supported the union of peasants and landowners, another circumstance that aroused the peasants’ dissatisfaction with the landowners was revealed—presumably the peasants opposed the idea proposed by the landowners to give one seat to Jews.⁴⁰ This version should be doubted, as according to the report of the Union’s Kaunas branch to the Central Bureau, the Poles were inclined to ignore the Jews.⁴¹ The situation became even more complicated when the landowners’ representatives did not turn up at one round of negotiations at the agreed time—a fact that was used by the opponents of the union with the landowners, most of all by Basanavičius.

Formation of the Lithuanian-Jewish Bloc After failed negotiations with Poles the Lithuanian-Jewish election bloc was formed, in which one seat was reserved for Jews, one for landowners, and the rest for peasants, which revealed the victory of Basanavičius, who sought a coalition with

the Jews from the beginning of pre-election discussions and labeled his opponents “antisemites.” Despite Basanavičius’s “reproaches” to Jews, he considered Poles the major enemies of Lithuanians, thus a bloc with Jews was merely a lesser evil. It should be added that the political programs of both liberal Lithuanians and Jews contained mutually advantageous postulates. These were general democratic requirements: civic and political rights for all subjects of the empire regardless of their national and confessional dependency.⁴² In addition, Jewish liberals—such as Kadet Illya Romm—spoke for the nationalization of land and its transfer to those who cultivate it,⁴³ which was also the Lithuanians’ aim. A large part—possible a majority—of Lithuanian society supported the abolishment of the Pale of Settlement, though undoubtedly pursuing egoistic aims. The abolishment of the Pale of Settlement was necessary for Lithuanians above all as a means of making Lithuania’s Jewish population shrink: “When Jews are spread in a wider territory, it will be easier for ourselves to make our way to the cities. Thus it is totally clear that Jewish equality is very necessary not only for the Jews, but also for us. By helping Jews to achieve equality, we will facilitate life for ourselves in the nearest future.”⁴⁴

The Union’s requirement that the Duma seats should be distributed not only among Lithuanians and Jews deserves separate mention. The aim to elect one Pole had several motifs, some of them rather abstract; for example, observation of democratic principles and representation of all three largest national groups in the Duma, and respecting the interests of burghers, among whom many were Poles. Yet there were more practical considerations, such as the fear that if left out, Poles could develop anti-semitic views.⁴⁵ As was written in a letter of the Union’s Kaunas department to the Central Bureau, Lithuanians could not understand this requirement of the Jews, and accepted it only after a period of doubts. Incidentally, both sides interpreted this point of the agreement differently: Jews mentioned that one seat was assigned to Poles, while Basanavičius saw it as assigned to “a Lithuanian, a Democrat from the landowners’ curia.”⁴⁶ Such difference in views confirms once again that the agreement was interpreted differently: the Jews did not want to strain relations with the Poles, and the Lithuanians led by Basanavičius opposed as much as they could the election of a Pole and were not much concerned about the possible strain of relations.

Thus, from the Kaunas *gubernia* the following persons were elected: Jew Leontii Bramson; peasants Juozas Kubilius, Laurynas Lopas, Juozas Sabalis; priest Vincentas Jarulaitis; and landowner Česlovas Milvydas.

The situation in the Vilnius *gubernia* and the election of a separate representative from the city of Vilnius differed from that in the Kaunas *gubernia*. In both cases, a certain Jewish-Lithuanian bloc emerged, but the influence of its formation on the election results was quite unlike the one in the Kaunas *gubernia*.

The City of Vilnius

In the city of Vilnius, the main struggle took place between the Polish and Jewish election committees.⁴⁷ The Poles submitted the candidacy of the well-known lawyer Tadeusz Wróblewski (Tadas Vrublevskis). Wróblewski was one of the few representatives of Lithuanian society who was truly concerned about the interests of all national groups in Lithuania and defended the principle of their equal rights, including during the elections to the Duma.⁴⁸ After the elections, Wróblewski asserted that he had offered the following combination to the Jewish committee. He had to be included in the list of the Jewish committee, and if it turned out that the majority of the electors were Jews, he would vote for the candidate of the Jewish committee, and if the majority were Poles, then Jews would elect him.⁴⁹ However, as was already mentioned, electors were grouped on the national rather than party-ideological basis, thus even the Jewish Kadets did not support the candidacy of Kadet Wróblewski. Moreover, seeking to compromise Wróblewski's candidacy, Jews "recalled" the notorious Blondes case of an ostensible ritual murder in Vilnius in 1900, where Wróblewski was involved as a lawyer.

The Jewish election committee, established by the Vilnius department of the Kadet party and the Union's group,⁵⁰ at first submitted the candidacy of the famous Kadet Maksim Vinaver, but as the latter was elected to the Duma in St. Petersburg, the Zionist Shmariahu Levin was chosen as the next candidate.⁵¹

In this opposition of two election committees, part of the Vilnius Lithuanians joined the Jews. As the number of Lithuanians in Vilnius was small,⁵² their support for a Jewish candidate might have hardly been significant. In general, many articles on the elections were published in the Jewish press, but the topic of a union with Lithuanians did not receive more serious attention.⁵³ It is quite probable that Jews primarily needed Lithuanian support as a symbolic gesture, enabling them to claim that they were democratic and represented not only the Jewish interests. Besides, by including several Lithuanians in their electoral list, they hardly risked

anything, as Lithuanians were listed in the “Polish” districts (4th and 6th), that is where Jews were a minority and their candidates would not have won anyway.⁵⁴ True, the formation of this bloc might also have been provoked by a wish to find allies in the elections in the Vilnius *gubernia*.

On the Lithuanian side, this election bloc was mainly promoted by the Priest Juozapas Ambraziejus. In addition to general anti-Polish moods, which were voiced during these elections,⁵⁵ such behavior on the part of the Lithuanian figures might have been determined by another motif, though it was not publicly declared. In the fierce struggle among the national groups for the “appropriation” of Vilnius, the Poles were the Lithuanians’ main rivals. Lithuanians would likely have found the election of a Pole to the Duma from the city of Vilnius the worst variant testifying to their failure to win the struggle for their historical capital. True, this Jewish-Lithuanian bloc did not receive wider, or at least public support of Lithuanian society.⁵⁶ The Lithuanian press did not publish a proclamation of the Lithuanian election committee encouraging people to vote for Jews;⁵⁷ besides, it turned out that famous Lithuanian political figures (Antanas Smetona, Jonas and Petras Vileišis) were included in the general electoral list without their knowledge.⁵⁸ Many Lithuanians did not support this action, clearly realizing that it would not bring any tangible advantage, but would make the Lithuanian-Polish relations even more complicated.⁵⁹ Even the adepts of this election bloc emphasized that it was merely a tactical short-time agreement: “This unification was decided by two committees solely for the matters of the elections to the ‘Duma.’ The same happens while extinguishing a fire: when a fire breaks out in the town, villagers run in haste to help the town dwellers, and vice versa.”⁶⁰ Thus, having received a symbolic support of Lithuanians, Jews elected Sh. Levin as a member of the Duma from the city of Vilnius.

Vilnius Gubernia

In the Vilnius *gubernia*, the elections took place under the influence of the Lithuanian and Belarusian Constitutional Catholic Party (Stronnictwo Konstytucyjno-Katolicke na Litwie i Białoruś; LBCCP), which dominated the *gubernia*’s election meeting, and whose candidates became members of the Duma. The invitation for Poles to support the candidacy of a Lithuanian (Donatas Malinauskas)—strongly promoted by a supporter of Lithuanian-Polish concord Konstancja Skirmuntt (Konstancija Skirmuntaitė)—was not accepted for two reasons. First, because of the Malinauskas’ activity in straining Lithuanian-Polish relations. Second, be-

cause of the Lithuanian bloc with the Jews in the elections in the Kaunas *gubernia*, which took place earlier than in the Vilnius *gubernia*.⁶¹ The Lithuanian election committee had formed an electoral union with the Jewish Committee. The Lithuanians tried to convince the Jews that the forty peasant electors in the *gubernia*'s election meeting would be Lithuanians, and Jews promised to elect Petras Vileišis in the city curia,⁶² but the LBCCP and its supporters held the victory.

Suwalki Province

The least complicated were the elections in the Suwałki *gubernia*, which was part of the Kingdom of Poland. Despite conflicts,⁶³ Polish and Jewish electors found themselves on the same side of the barricade. At the *gubernia*'s election meeting Lithuanians had the majority (23 Lithuanians, 11 Poles, and 5 Jews), so they did not need any coalitions to be able to elect two Duma members (Petras Vitkauskas and Juozas Girnius). Moreover, Polish and Jewish electors did not participate in the vote, as Lithuanians rejected their requirement not to seek the separation of the Suwałki *gubernia* from the Kingdom of Poland and its unification with other Lithuanian *gubernias*.⁶⁴ All Lithuanian political forces agreed with the necessity to separate the Suwałki *gubernia* from the Kingdom of Poland, but the Poles—even if agreeing with the legitimacy of this requirement—still thought that it came in a bad time, as it hindered the Kingdom of Poland from achieving autonomy. The logic of the Jewish electors was also clear. Since Aleksandr Wielopolski's 1862 reforms, Jews had the same rights as the other subjects of the Kingdom of Poland, while in the Pale of Settlement they suffered from discrimination. Therefore, their opposition to the possible change of status of the Suwałki *gubernia* was determined not by anti-Lithuanian views, but by purely pragmatic goals—such administrative reform might have downgraded their legal status as well as their economic situation.

However, the First Duma dominated by the Kadets did not hold its sessions for long. It was dismissed on 8 July 1906, and new elections took place at the beginning of the following year.

Elections to the Second Duma

During the elections to the Second Duma the imperial administration tried to interfere with the course of the elections more actively,⁶⁵ the left-wing parties participated in the elections, and the right-wing Russian parties were concentrated and active.⁶⁶ In addition, the Jewish Union did not have the same unifying role it had in the elections to the First Duma, and political competition on the “Jewish street” became much more intense.⁶⁷ However, like in the elections to the First Duma, the main criterion of grouping was the national factor.⁶⁸ Another important innovation was the fact that this time the elections in all three *gubernias* took place on the same day (6 February 1907), thus the election results in one *gubernia* could not influence the electors of another *gubernia*. Yet the electors’ behavior this time was at least partly determined by the “lessons” of the elections to the First Duma.

Kaunas Gubernia

It was most obviously revealed by the activity of landowners of the Kaunas *gubernia*.⁶⁹ The “betrayal” of Lithuanians made the landowners meticulously prepare for the new elections and look for possibilities to make an agreement with peasants. The landowners’ election committee of the Kaunas *gubernia* sought to hold negotiations with both Jewish and Lithuanian representatives.⁷⁰ A union with the latter had become a priority, but negotiations with the Lithuanian committee formed in Kaunas and dominated by right-wing Lithuanian politicians failed. First, not a single Lithuanian political force could agree with all points of the political program of the landowners’ committee (a reform of the order of elections based on democratic principles and by “giving priority to cultural elements” [without doubt landowners meant here themselves]; inviolability of private property).⁷¹ Besides, this program did not include the aim of seeking Lithuania’s autonomy in its ethnographic limits. Negotiations were made even more complicated by the fact that Lithuanians presented a list of landowners whom they wanted to see elected to the *gubernia*’s election meeting, and constantly stressed that the Kaunas *gubernia* could be represented only by a Lithuanian landowner.⁷²

True, there were some political groups in Lithuanian society, which agitated for the election bloc of landowners and peasants. Above all it refers to the Catholic-minded figures and their periodic press.⁷³ Indeed, in some places the main rivals in the first stage of the elections were candi-

dates of the Jewish Committee, on the one hand, and Christians, on the other hand.⁷⁴

Interestingly, in the *gubernia*'s cities, excluding Kaunas, even the Bund and the LSDP—which were united by social and political radicalism—did not succeed in forming a common election bloc.⁷⁵ This occurred despite the fact that the Lithuanian Social Democrat press agitated for a union between Lithuanians and Jews.⁷⁶ Especially intensive negotiations were going on in Šiauliai, where not only leftist parties made an agreement to support Zubov and Naftali Fridman but also Jewish Election Committee and a “Christian” Committee were negotiating about the candidates.⁷⁷ A fierce election struggle took place among different political groups on the “Jewish street”—for example, the Kadets and the Bund competed in Zarasai (Novo-Aleksandrovsk).⁷⁸ Yet, at that stage, Jewish parties managed to compromise on the candidates; the Union joined forces with the Bund and the Zionist Socialists.⁷⁹

Although the Lithuanian-Jewish election bloc formed during the elections to the First Duma, the available information shows that there was no considerable trust in Lithuanians. Some publications claiming that Lithuanian peasants treated Jews with animosity appeared in the newspaper *Jewish Elector* (Rus.: *Evreiskii izbiratel'*) published by the Union.⁸⁰ During the second election campaign, Lithuanians were described by some members of the Union as a subservient mass under the influence of landlords and priests.⁸¹ In Šiauliai, the Union's activists considered a possibility to form an election bloc with the landlords.⁸² According to some, Jews were interested in Lithuanians receiving fewer voices, because in case of victory, Lithuanians would have the majority in the *gubernia*'s election meeting, and then they definitely would not be willing to share seats with other curias.⁸³

The sole known case of Jews forming a coalition with Lithuanians in the first stage of the elections was in the city of Kaunas, where the Lithuanian election committee was formed by the LDP.⁸⁴ The members of that party, like in the elections to the First Duma, gave clear priority to a bloc with Jews because, in their opinion, both nations were united by the goal to make radical reforms. Moreover, Lithuanians were interested in the abolishment of the Pale of Settlement. Important in this case was a tactical consideration: the corrected election law made the election of Lithuanian intellectuals in the peasants' curia very difficult, thus it became important to elect them in cities. Jews supported the election of one Lithuanian (Vladas Stašynskas) from the city of Kaunas, and Lithuanians obliged themselves to vote for one Jew at the *gubernia*'s election meet-

ing.⁸⁵ If we believe a publication in the Zionist Socialist newspaper *Der nayer veg*, Jewish electors in Kaunas gave priority to left-wing candidates,⁸⁶ who got along with people of other nationalities holding similar views. In other words, it is probable that active participation of the Bund and the Zionist Socialists in these elections created more favorable conditions for the formation of the Jewish-Lithuanian election bloc.

Formally this agreement lost its force at the *gubernia*'s election meeting; but a coalition was formed regardless. The Kaunas *gubernia* was represented at the Second Duma of Russia by one Jew (Shakhna Abramson), and the rest of the seats went to Lithuanians (Pranas Gudavičius, Povilas Kumelis, Antanas Kupstas, Antanas Povylius, and Vladas Stašynskas). Such an outcome of the elections was decided by the political orientation of peasant electors, dominated by the LSDP and sympathetic persons.⁸⁷ Unlike the LDP, which negotiated with landowners and would have formed a coalition with them had they agreed with the proposed conditions, the LSDP had a clear position: to vote exclusively for "a Jew, who is an enemy of the administration, rather than some lickspittle, petty nobleman, landowner, or priest."⁸⁸ Having assembled in Kaunas, peasant electors agreed to join forces and entrusted the negotiations to the LSDP leaders—Steponas Kairys, Pranas Mažylis, and Vincas Mickevičius-Kapsukas.⁸⁹ While seeking to disrupt this bloc, landowners resorted to various tricks, and submitted the candidacy of the priest Maciejowski; thus peasants were faced with a dilemma—a priest or a Jew?⁹⁰ Ultimately, the LSDP managed to retain its influence on the electors.⁹¹

The standpoint of the Jewish election committee was also favorable to this agreement. The committee held a discussion on 26–28 December 1906, during which a decision was taken to form a union with representatives of the peasants' curia,⁹² and the requirement of supporting the cause of Lithuania's autonomy was discussed. In this case it is not so important if Lithuanians raised this requirement for the Jews as a necessary condition of agreement, or if the Jewish election committee itself, recalling the details of the elections to the First Duma, began to discuss this issue anticipating the Lithuanian position. The discussions brought out not only the different views of the Jewish public figures on the issue, but also certain common standpoints. Everyone agreed that Lithuanians were an uncultured (i.e., uneducated) nation. Yet this circumstance encouraged some to oppose the requirement of Lithuania's autonomy, while others thought that this should not be feared, as the level of Jewish culture was much higher. Consequently, Jews would be able to defend their interests in autonomous Lithuania. Finally, it was agreed that the Jewish deputies

should support the requirement of Lithuania's autonomy, but only on condition that minority rights would be guaranteed.⁹³ Thus, a Jew was also included among the representatives of the Kaunas *gubernia* in the Second Duma of Russia.⁹⁴

The City of Vilnius

The Vilnius Jewish election committee, in which representatives of many Jewish parties were involved, and which submitted the candidacy of Kadet O. Gruzenberg, expected success, like in the previous year.⁹⁵ Possible collaboration with another large national group in Vilnius—the Poles—was out of the question. The elections to the First Duma, particularly in the Kingdom of Poland, where Jews were supposedly threatened with pogroms should they win the elections,⁹⁶ worsened the relations of these two national groups. It was obvious for the Jewish press that like in the previous years, the struggle would take place between the Poles and the Jews, while the number of Lithuanians as well as Russians would not allow them to have a significant influence on the elections.⁹⁷ Poles established their own election committee, submitted their candidate (head of the city of Vilnius Michał Węśławski⁹⁸) and only then tried to negotiate with Lithuanians.⁹⁹

A small group of Lithuanians, having found itself between these two competing election committees, discussed two possibilities: to support the candidate of the Jewish committee, or to participate in the elections with a separate ballot. Supporting M. Węśławski was excluded from this discussion. Both the Lithuanian election committee and the *Vilniaus žinios* thought that it was impossible to support a Polish candidate because of the social and national motifs. “In the elections not to side with and not to make friends with the so-called ‘Lithuanian Poles’ (*Polacy na Litwie*), who rule Lithuanian land as landlords, but belong mainly to the ‘Polish National Party’ (*Narodowa Demokracja*); they are alien to us and are the greatest killers-Polonizers of Lithuania.”¹⁰⁰ Yet another group participating in the elections was deemed trustworthy: “In Lithuania's cities and towns, where Lithuanians live intermixed with people of other nationalities, to go together with a nation, which, like Lithuanians, is working people, Democrats, who are not against the Lithuanian spirit and try to implement the democratic principles in life and politics.”¹⁰¹ Although the nation, with which Lithuanians should “go together,” was not named, there was no doubt that it meant the Jews.¹⁰² After some hesitations, A. Smetona also agreed with this tactic.¹⁰³ The considerations of this Lithua-

nian public figure could be described as choosing the lesser evil. In Smetona's opinion, it was better to support the Jewish candidate, who was a Democrat ("progressive"), while the Polish candidate was a Conservative ("retrograde").¹⁰⁴ As was mentioned, at that time a different tactic was also discussed: not to join any election blocs and submit their own candidates. It was clearly realized that Lithuanians did not have any possibilities to become even electors, let alone their election to the Duma, in this way they expected to test their prowess, that is to find out how many Lithuanian electors were in the city of Vilnius. If more votes were collected, in the future the Lithuanian positions in negotiations with other national groups would become stronger.¹⁰⁵ It was this particular tactic that finally won.¹⁰⁶ However, J. Basanavičius and other candidates submitted by Lithuanians collected very few votes and did not even become electors.¹⁰⁷

In the election meeting of the city of Vilnius, candidates submitted by the Polish election committee received more votes, thus M. Węśławski became a member of the Duma. Poles explained this result by a more successful mobilization of Polish electors.¹⁰⁸ Jews accused the Poles for their failure claiming that they manipulated the elections, especially by adding an extra district with Jewish minority to the city of Vilnius,¹⁰⁹ and by looking for the guilty among themselves: the left-wing parties accused the Union, and the latter accused the Bund and the Zionists-Socialists.¹¹⁰ The pro-Zionist *Hazman*, which was published in Hebrew in Vilnius, took a different standpoint: it announced that the gravest mistake of the committee of the Vilnius Jews was not to form a common election bloc with Lithuanians.¹¹¹

Vilnius Gubernia

In the Vilnius *gubernia*, the election campaign in late 1906–early 1907 was markedly different from the one during the elections to the First Duma, as this time left-wing parties were very active. Having established an election committee, the Lithuanian Democrats later sought to coordinate their activity with other left-wing parties (the Belarusian Hromada, the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party, and the Bund).¹¹² These parties, as well as the Lithuanian press, urged peasants to unite with Jews.¹¹³ Jews found this alliance acceptable not only because it would have allowed them to elect one or several Jewish candidates to the Duma, but also for strategic purposes: "A bloc of Jews and peasants will be a good instructive material. Peasants get accustomed to Jews, maintain

close contacts with them and consider the Jewish deputy elected with their support ‘their own person.’ Authorized persons arrive at their villages and tell peasants how they succeeded in holding a victory over their enemies with the help of Jews, and as a result peasants are re-educated in terms of their relations with Jews.”¹¹⁴ Thus, the Jews expected that cooperation during the elections would lessen the peasantry’s anti-Jewish views. Negotiations between peasants and Jews would have ended in an agreement and a mutually advantageous result of the elections, but at the last minute the Bishop of Vilnius Eduard von der Ropp interfered, and the landowners won over a part of the peasants, who along with landowners determined the election outcome.¹¹⁵

Suwałki Gubernia

In the Suwałki *gubernia*, like in previous years, intrigue was absent in the elections. The efforts of the Prienai rabbi A. Raines to include the Suwałki *gubernia* in the area of the Union’s activity and achieve that Lithuanians would not have the majority in the *gubernia*’s election committee¹¹⁶ did not receive serious approval. Already at the initial stage of the elections it was clear to everyone that Lithuanians would have the majority in the *gubernia*’s election meeting (leftist Andrius Bulota and Kadet Petras Leonas were later elected to the Duma). Probably this realization also changed the behavior of the Jews, who supported Lithuanian candidates during the election of electors in some cities,¹¹⁷ or at least invited to support their candidate, promising in return to support Lithuanians at the *gubernia*’s election meeting.¹¹⁸ The Jews fulfilled this promise, having received guarantees from Lithuanians that they could expect cultural autonomy.¹¹⁹ Certainly, the Jewish support for Lithuanians might have been prompted by other motifs, such as the strained Polish-Jewish relations in the Kingdom of Poland.

The analysis of the elections to the first two Russian Dumas allows us not only to discuss the dynamics of ethnic relations, but also to reveal the views on Lithuanian-Jewish collaboration of different political groups representing various national groups.

J. Basanavičius’s anti-Polish position was the determining factor in the readiness of Lithuanians to cooperate with Jews during the elections to the First Duma in the Kaunas *gubernia*, which is the most important with a

view to the topic under discussion. The majority of peasant electors were inclined to make an agreement with the landowners' curia, and it was only the shrewd manipulation of Basanavičius that changed the position of the majority of Lithuanian electors, and helped reach an agreement with the representatives of the burghers' curia. Exactly in the same way, in Vilnius, the support of part of Lithuanians for Jews, which only had symbolic significance, was determined by the Ambraziejus's anti-Polish views. During the elections to the Second Duma, Lithuanian electors in the Kaunas *gubernia*, most of whom were either members of the LSDP or sympathizers, did not solve a dilemma with which curia they should cooperate. Their radical social and economic views encouraged them to form an election bloc with Jews. Thus, collaboration of Lithuanians and Jews was based not only on some common objectives and democratic values, but also, to a great extent, on a principle "the enemy of my enemy is my friend."¹²⁰

The Union's position that dominated on the "Jewish street" during the elections to the First Duma was not unanimous. Part of the Union's activists in the Kaunas *gubernia* tended to cooperate with landowners (Poles) as a better educated and better organized, thus more reliable and influential group. Others, for example M. Katsenelenbogen from Ukmerge, saw Lithuanians—who were gaining increasing national self-consciousness—as a more suitable ally. At first sight the latter position prevailed at the election meeting of the Kaunas *gubernia*, but the requirement of Jewish electors to elect one Pole in the Kaunas *gubernia* shows that in fact, the third position won—that is, distribution of seats among three largest national groups (Lithuanians, Jews, and Poles). At the beginning of the elections to the Second Duma, the Lithuanian-Jewish bloc was not understood as the only possibility on the "Jewish street." Voices doubting the culturedness and reliability of Lithuanians could still be heard. However, the worsening Polish-Jewish relations, the active participation of the left-wing Jewish parties (in the election struggle), successful and effective activity of the LSDP in the districts of the Kaunas *gubernia* encouraged the Jewish election committee to make an agreement with Lithuanians in the Kaunas *gubernia*. The shift that occurred is well illustrated by a meeting that took place right before the elections, during which Jewish electors decided to support the requirement of Lithuania's autonomy which was one of the Lithuanians' basic political goals.

Such cooperation of Jews and Lithuanians during the elections not only allowed them to get to know each other better, but also taught them to listen to their partners' requirements. This experience was recalled in the later years and served as an argument for future cooperation.¹²¹

However, we should not overestimate the significance of formation of this Jewish-Lithuanian election bloc for the future relations of the two nations, above all their political elites. For both groups, particularly Lithuanians, but also for Jews during the elections to the Second Duma, this cooperation was for the most part determined by anti-Polish views. In other words, this decision was based on the logic of the “lesser evil.” The Jews’ promise expressed before the election to the Second Duma, to support the requirement of Lithuania’s autonomy, should also not be overestimated. The support for autonomy was related to a stipulation that minority rights would be guaranteed (the way Jews imagined them); besides, it was not defined what kind of Lithuania was meant. Like the later events—particularly World War I—would show, Jews and Lithuanians imagined Lithuania’s inner structure and limits differently.

NOTES

- 1 Its program enjoyed popularity among people of other nationalities, as the Kadets were the most favorably inclined toward the requirements of non-Russians among all influential Russian political parties. Lithuanian representatives led by Jonas Basanavičius also negotiated with the Kadet leaders: Dras J. Basanavičius, A. Dubinskas, A. Voldemaras, “Lietuvos autonomija ir Rusų konstitutiškai demokratiškoji partija,” *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 13. A famous and influential Lithuanian lawyer Petras Leonas was a member of the Kadet party as well: Leonas’s letter of 3 November 1906 to the Central Committee of the Kadet party, *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi federatsii* (State Archive of the Russian Federation [GARF]), f. 523, op. 1, d. 221, l. 6.
- 2 T. Emmons, *The Formation of Political Parties and the First National Elections in Russia* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1983), pp. 150, 161, 176–177; “Wilno, 7 grudnia. P.P.K.D,” *Kurjer Litewski*, 1905, no. 82; “Uchreditel’skoe sobranie Vilenskoï evreiskoi gruppy konstituts.-demokr. partii,” *Novaia zaria*, 1905, no. 22. As the party’s local adepts informed the Central Committee, the Kadet party was not numerous in the Kaunas *gubernia*, where the formation of political groups took place on a national basis. File containing the correspondence of the Central Committee of the Kadet party with the party members in the Kaunas *gubernia*: GARF, f. 523, op. 1, d. 221. Announcements appeared in the press that the Kadets built a coalition election committee in the Kaunas *gubernia*, but its functions remained unclear, as the election campaign had to be led by “national committees” rather than this committee: “Nash krai,” *Novaia zaria*, 1906, no. 75.
- 3 Proofs of that hostility, when the Jewish Kadets called one of the most democratic figures of Lithuanian Poles Tadas Vrublevskis (Tadeusz Wróblewski) “a henchman of the clerical-agrarian groups,” and a Polish Kadet referred to the Jewish adepts of that party as “nationalists rather than Kadets,” can be found in the file containing the correspondence of the Central Committee with the party members from the Vilnius *gubernia*: Vilnius gub.[erniia], GARF, f. 523, op. 1, d. 175.

- 4 On the western fringes of the Russian empire, national groups often coincided with social: Lithuanians were primarily peasants; Jews were burghers; Poles were noblemen and Catholic burghers.
- 5 True, there were some exceptions: e.g. the Suwałki *gubernia*, but the situation there will be discussed later. Election districts coincided with *gubernias*, and electors were divided into four curias: landowners, burghers, peasants, and workers. First, electors were elected in separate curias. Then, at the *gubernia*'s election meeting, these electors elected members of the Duma according to the quotas established for each *gubernia*. For more on this topic see D. Staliūnas, "Rinkimai į I Rusijos Dūmą Lietuvoje," *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*. 1992 (Vilnius, 1994), p. 46.
- 6 Because this article is mostly interested in the Lithuanian-Jewish political collaboration, only the course of elections in the *gubernias* where political forces representing these two nationalities actively operated, i.e., the Kaunas, Suwałki, and Vilnius *gubernias*, are being analyzed.
- 7 Contemporary Lithuanian historians tend to distinguish 1905 as the period of the true revolution (or national rebellion), when the "events in Lithuania were much more spontaneous, and their means of expression and methods differed from those used in the empire in 1906 (particularly from March 1906)." R. Miknys, "Lietuvos demokratų partija 1902–1915 metais" *Lietuvių Atgimimo istorijos studijos*, vol. 10 (Vilnius A. Varnas' personal enterprise, 1995), p. 45.
- 8 Historians' major works on the topic include M. Biržiška, *Lietuvių tautos kelias į naują gyvenimą*, vol. 2: *Atbundanti Tauta—darbai, žygiai ir veikėjai* (Los Angeles, 1953), pp. 133–141; P. Čepėnas, *Naujųjų laikų Lietuvos istorija*, vol. 1 (Chicago, 1977), pp. 401–416; R. Miknys, E. Motieka, "Tautiškoji lietuvių demokratų partija: idėjinės-politinės kūrimosi aplinkybės," *Lietuvių Atgimimo istorijos studijos*, vol. 1: *Tautinės savimonės žadintojai: nuo asmens iki partijos* (Vilnius: Sietynas, 1990), p. 112; D. Staliūnas, "Rinkimai į I Rusijos Dūmą Lietuvoje," *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*. 1992 (Vilnius, 1994), pp. 45–66; S. Atamukas, *Lietuvos žydų kelias* (Vilnius: Alma litera, 1998), pp. 106–107; N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip: The Construction of Lithuanian Identity in Imperial Russia," PhD diss., Brandeis University, pp. 361–395; A. Gai galaitė, "Lietuvos atstovai Rusijos Dūmoje 1906–1917 metais" (Vilnius: Vilnius Pedagogical University, 2006), pp. 27–28; V. Levin, "Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections, 1906–1907," in *Jews and Slavs*, vol. 7, ed. W. Moskovich, L. Finberg, M. Feller (Jerusalem and Kyiv, 2000), pp. 233–264; V. Levin, "Politics at the Crossroads—Jewish Parties and the Second Duma Elections 1907," *Leipziger Beiträge zur jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. D. Diner, Volume II, 2004, pp. 129–146; Roman Jurkowski, *Sukcesy i porażki. Ziemiaństwo polskie Ziem Zabrzanych w wyborach do Dumy Państwowej i Rady Państwa 1906–1913* (Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie, 2009).
- 9 P. Čepėnas, *Naujųjų laikų Lietuvos istorija*, p. 46.
- 10 S. Atamukas, *Lietuvos žydų kelias*, pp. 106–107.
- 11 V. Levin, "Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections, 1906–1907," pp. 235–236; V. Levin, "Politics at the Crossroads—Jewish Parties and the Second Duma Elections 1907," pp. 130–131.
- 12 The Union's goal was to struggle for equal civic and national rights for Jews by legal means: Ch. Gassenschmidt, *Jewish Liberal Politics in Czarist Russia, 1900–14. The Modernization of Russian Jewry* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1995); V. Levin, "Politics at

- the Crossroads—Jewish Parties and the Second Duma Elections 1907,” p. 132; I. Frenkel, *Prorochestvo i politika. Sotsializm, natsionalizm, i russkoe evreistvo, 1862–1917*, ed. V. Levin (Jerusalem: Gesharim, 5768; Moscow: Mosty kultury, 2008), p. 219.
- 13 Letter of 20 August 1905, received through an agency, sent from St. Petersburg by the Union’s Central Bureau and addressed to T. Zamkowski in Grodno, *GARF*, f. 102, osobyi otdel, II otd., 1905, d. 999, ch. 13, l. 30; V. Levin, “Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections, 1906–1907,” p. 236. The Central Bureau also sent its emissaries to make sure that the Union’s departments in different *gubernias* followed the established plan of activity. Solomon Choronzhitski was sent to the Vilnius, Kaunas, and Grodno *gubernias*: Letter of 7 September 1905, received through an agency, sent from St. Petersburg by the Union’s Central Bureau and addressed to T. Zamkowski in Grodno, *GARF*, f. 102, osobyi otdel, II otd., 1905, d. 999, ch. 13, l. 38.
 - 14 Letter of the chairman of the Union’s Panevėžys department to the Central Bureau of February 26, Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii Archiv (Russian State History Archive (RGIA), f. 1565, op. 1, d. 114, l. 19–20.
 - 15 R. Laukaitytė, “Bandymai įkurti Lietuvos krikščionių demokratų partiją 1905–1906 metais,” *Lituanistica*, 1992, no. 2 (10), pp. 29–41. A number of Lithuanian political figures of the Catholic wing were involved in the Lithuanian and Belarussian Constitutional Catholic Party (LBCCP) established by the Vilnius Bishop Eduard von der Ropp at the end of 1905–beginning of 1906. Dominated by the Poles, the LBCCP sought to unite all Catholics in the region regardless of their national dependency. D. Staliūnas, “Vilniaus vyskupo E. Ropo veiklos pėdsakais (1903–1907),” *Lietuvių Atgimimo istorijos studijos*, vol. 7: *Atgimimas ir Katalikų bažnyčia* (Vilnius: “Katalikų pasaulio” leidykla, 1994), pp. 142–219. The LBCCP sought to rally the Catholic electorate in Kaunas as well, but this attempt was not successful. R. S. [?], “Kauno konstitucionalistai-katalikai,” *Lietuvos ūkininkas*, 1906, no. 13, pp. 171–172; S. Lizdeika [St. Raila], “Kaunas. Katalikų susirinkimo nepasisekimas,” *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 55.
 - 16 R. Miknys and E. Motieka, “Tautiškoji lietuvių demokratų partija,” pp. 80–125.
 - 17 Iu. Gessen, “Predvybornaia deiatel’nost v cherte osedlosti,” *Voskhod*, 1906 (September) no. 7, p. 28; “Za nedeliu,” *Voskhod*, 1906 (September), no. 10, p. 18.
 - 18 Letter of an unidentified person (Jurgis) from Ukmergė of 1 January 1906 to an unidentified addressee in Vilnius regarding the elections, *Lietuvos Mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių bibliotekos Rankraščių skyrius* (Manuscript Department of the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (LMAVB RS), f. 255, b. 450, l. 1–2. According to Ozer Finkelshtein, there were Jewish representatives, who tended to cooperate with Poles, but majority supported a bloc with Lithuanians: O. Finkelshtein, “Paraleln,” *Zum ondenken fun O. Finkelshtein* (Kaunas, 1938), p. 177–178. A “Democrat” in this case was the one who sought equal rights for all subjects of the empire regardless of their national or confessional dependence and was not a judophobe.
 - 19 Iks. [J. Basanavičius], “Kauno atstovų rinkimai,” *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 62; R. Miknys and E. Motieka, “Tautiškoji lietuvių demokratų partija,” p. 112.
 - 20 Letters of the chairman of the Union’s Panevėžys department of 7 September 1905, 24 January and 1 February 1906 to the Union’s Central Bureau, *RGIA*, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 114, l. 2–3, 14–15, 17–18. Already in the fall of 1905, some optimistic forecasts predicted that all representatives of towns and cities in the *gubernia*’s electoral meeting might be Jews. Letter of the Union’s Kaunas department of 1 October 1905 to the Union’s Central Bureau, *RGIA*, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 26, l. 18.

- 21 The Union's activists in the Kaunas *gubernia* knew that the Lithuanian right-wing politicians launched their activity on the question of elections rather late. Their activity supposedly began after the electors had been elected. Letter of the Union's activist of 28 February 1906 to the Central Bureau, RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 26, l. 23.
- 22 Letter of an unidentified person (activist of the Union) of 19 March 1906 to the Union's Bureau, RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 257, l. 8.
- 23 Letter of an unidentified person (activist of the Union) of 19 March 1906 to the Union's Bureau, RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 257, l. 8.
- 24 Iks. [J. Basanavičius], "Kauno atstovų rinkimai," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 62. Basanavičius's writings show that he had several traditional "reproaches" for the Jews, such as they supposedly "made our people drunk" and exploited them. At the same time he acknowledged that "while living in the cities, these Jews played a certain role of culture bearers, and as craftsmen, merchants, money lenders, lessees of customs houses, innkeepers etc. of all sorts they played this role the best they could." J. Basanavičius, "Straipsnelis ir liaudies dainos apie žydus," *Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos instituto Rankraščių skyrius* (Manuscript Department of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore [LLTI RS]), f. 2, b. 362, l. 84a, 84b.
- 25 The landlords' curia even asked the Telšiai (Samogitian) Bishop Mečislovas Paliulionis for help.
- 26 Lithuanian Catholic priests can be distinguished as a separate, though poorly organized group, whose positions not always coincided with the position of the LNDP.
- 27 Already at the end of February, the activists of the Union's Kaunas department were under the impression that the Poles did not intend to negotiate with the Jews: a letter of an unidentified person (activist of the Union) of 22 February 1906, to the Central Bureau, RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 26, l. 23.
- 28 R. Jurkowski, *Sukcesy i porażki*, p. 95.
- 29 Ryś. [?], "Akcja Wyborcza kowieńska," *Kurjer Litewski*, 1906, no. 81.
- 30 The leaders of this movement put forward a model for social development at the beginning of the twentieth century, which was intended to neutralize ethnic nationalism by forming a civil society on the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania rather than an ethnocultural one.
- 31 K. Woykieleŭ, "Nieco o wyborze posłów," *Gazeta Wileńska*, 1906, no. 42.
- 32 Letter of an unidentified person (member of the Union) of 24 September 1905, to Semyon Ephimovich (?), RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 10, l. 254.
- 33 Letter from the Zarasai (Novoaleksandrovsk) department to the Central Bureau (after 10 September 1905), RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 104, l. 7; letter of the Union's Panevėžys department to the Central Bureau of 7 September 1905, RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 114, l. 2 (the author of the letter noted that the Lithuanian national movement had recently become stronger, but apparently did not regard this phenomenon as significant).
- 34 M. Katsenelenbogen's letter of 9 September 1905 to the Central Bureau, RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 70, l. 27–30.
- 35 Letter of the Union's Kaunas Committee to the Central Bureau (n.d.), RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 26, l. 60–61.
- 36 Several published and unpublished versions of the pre-election meetings and the course of the elections have survived; letter of the Union's Kaunas Committee to the Central Bureau (n.d.), RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 26, l. 60–61; A. Medeksza, "Wyjaśnienia. Porażka kowieńska," *Kurjer Litewski*, 1906, no. 76; Senelys Lietuvys (J. Jurkevičius),

Paslaptis Kauno atstovų rinkimuose. (Kas kaltas?) (Kaunas: S. Banaitis printing house, 1906); Iks. [J. Basanavičius], "Kauno gubernijos atstovų rinkimas 1906 m. ir jo istorija," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, nos. 196, 197, 198, 199. Certainly, all the authors not only narrated the course of the negotiations, but also protected a certain political standpoint. Thus all of them did not escape a certain bias. Conversely, the description of the dynamics of the events and the negotiators' standpoints basically coincides. The manuscript of Basanavičius's article published in *Vilniaus žinios*, which basically coincides with the published version, has survived. The publication does not contain the characteristics of the Poles found in the manuscript, which began with the following words, "The majority of those people, even though having the Lithuanian blood, are the worst enemies of Lithuanians, belong to the 'wszechpolak' party, are mean retrogrades and lickspittles for the authorities." J. Basanavičius, "Kauno gubernijos atstovų rinkimas 1906 m. ir jo kronika," LLTI RS, f. 2, b. 139, quote l. 2. Although the version published by Basanavičius was criticized by some participants of the events because of certain inaccuracies, they mainly referred to minor details. Rev. P. Januševičius, Laiškai į „Viln. Žin.," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 199.

- 37 The peasants of the Krekenava area (Panevėžys district, Kaunas *gubernia*) handed mandates to their electors, which included the following clause, "By no means allowing Jews to buy land and live in villages, even on the landowner's land." Rinkimai Dumon, *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 60.
- 38 J. G. [J. Gabrys-Paršaitis], "Pirmutinis mūsų atstovų darbas," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 93.
- 39 Pilypas [K. Žalys?], "Naujai apsireiškusi žydų tarpe dvasia," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 94. Also one of the leaders of the LDP Povilas Višinskis opposed the aim of the Jews to receive personal-cultural autonomy. "Uchreditel'skoe sobranie Vilenskoj evreiskoi gruppy konstituts.-demokr. partii," *Novaia zaria*, 1906, no. 22. Naftali Friedman, an active figure of the Union, asserted that the first time when Jewish electors addressed Lithuanians in order to make negotiations, they were called foreigners. A. Shohat, "The Beginnings of Anti-Semitism in Independent Lithuania," *Yad Vashem Studies*, 1958, no. 2, p. 8.
- 40 Senelys Lietuvys [J. Jurkevičius], *Paslaptis Kauno atstovų rinkimuose*.
- 41 Letter of the Union's Kaunas Committee to the Central Bureau (n.d.), RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 26, l. 60–61.
- 42 The LDP newspaper *Ūkininkas* wrote, "We need to join forces with everyone who goes against the old order, who fights for human rights, who struggles against the rule of the police, who disrupts the tsar's power. Jews are doing a great deal of good now by fighting fiercely for freedom. Everyone must help them in their fight and not to hamper them. We must help them as much as we can to protect them from attacks. Jews are our neighbors, and we must treat them as human beings and neighbors. Now they must be closer to us than the others, as the majority of them are laying their life for freedom and human rights." A-s [P. Višinskis], "Naujos caro 'malonės'," *Ūkininkas*, 1905, no. 10, p. 272.
- 43 "Za nedeliu," *Voskhod*, 1906, no. 2.
- 44 Pilypas [K. Žalys], "Su kuo reikia tartis rinkimų laike," *Lietuvos ūkininkas*, 1907, no. 3, p. 35. Also see "Kroniai," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1905, no. 109; A. Sketeris, "Sodiečių sandora," *ibid.*, no. 266; "Joniskis," *ibid.*, no. 286; A-s [P. Višinskis], "Naujos caro 'malonės'," *Ūkininkas*, 1905, no. 10, p. 272; "Za nedeliu," *Voskhod*, 1905, no. 16; Re-

- quirements of the Lithuanian Peasants of the Pupėnai Rural District (Kaunas *gubernia*), 10 July 1905, *Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas* (Lithuanian State Historical Archives (LVIA)), f. 378, ps, 1905, b. 13, l. 116.
- 45 Letter of the Union's Kaunas Committee to the Central Bureau, RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 26, l. 60–61. In the negotiations between the Poles and the Jews in the Grodno *gubernia*, the latter required that at least one seat would be given to a Russian Orthodox. In Terence Emmons's opinion, such position of the Jews was provoked by their fear that if no Russian Orthodox was elected in the *gubernia*, this confessional group might hold anti-Jewish pogroms. T. Emmons, *The Formation of Political Parties and the First National Elections in Russia*, p. 338. The same logic prevailed in the Union's department in Vitebsk, when electors to the *gubernia*'s meeting were elected in that city. Although it was possible to elect all five Jews as representatives of the Union, in fear of provoking dissatisfaction of other confessional groups, along with the Jews, one Christian candidate—Kadet (O. Volkovich)—was elected. Most probably because of the same reasons Jews gave over several more seats in other cities of the Vitebsk *gubernia*. Later the same Volkovich was elected as a member of the Duma in fear of Christian dissatisfaction. Letter of an unidentified person (member of the Union) of 15 April 1906 to the Union's Central Bureau, RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 43, l. 55–60. Certainly, in the Kaunas *gubernia* the situation was different than in the Belarussian *gubernias*. There Poles constituted a minority (unlike the Orthodox population in some Belarussian *gubernias*); besides, in the "hierarchy of enemies" of the authorities they occupied an important place, thus could not even expect the officials' consent for possible violent actions against Jews. Thus, Jews had fewer reasons to fear the possible revenge of the Poles.
- 46 Iks. [J. Basanavičius], "Kauno gubernijos atstovų rinkimas 1906 m. ir jo istorija," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 198.
- 47 Not expecting favorable results, Russians required that a separate member of the Duma should be elected on their behalf. Letter of the governor of Vilnius to the Minister of Home Affairs P. Durnovo of 16 February 1906, LVIA, f. 378, bs, 1905 m., b. 154, l. 179–180.
- 48 Wróblewski's undated letter to the editors of *Vilenskii vestnik*, LMAVB RS, f. 9, b. 2704, l. 6; T.-S. Wróblewski, "List otwarty do wyborców m. Wilna, polaków i litwinów," *Kurjer Litewski*, 1906, no. 70. For more on Wróblewski see D. Staliūnas, "Grazhdanin Velikogo Kniazhestva Litovskogo," *Vilnius*, March–April 1995, pp. 122–143; idem., "Tado Vrublevskio politinės minties bruožai," in *Lietuvių Atgimimo istorijos studijos*, vol. 13: *Mykolas Römeris* (Vilnius, 1996), pp. 150–170; idem., "Tadeusz Wróblewski a idea kulturalnej autonomii personalnej na Litwie na początku XX w.," *Krajowość—tradycje zgody narodów w dobie nacjonalizmu. Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej w Instytucie Historii UAM w Poznaniu (11–12 maja 1998)*, ed. J. Jurkiewicz (Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 1999), pp. 99–107.
- 49 Wróblewski's letter to I. Petrunkevich of 7 May 1906, LMAVB RS, f. 7, b. 1282, l. 3–4. The Union's local activists asserted that without the Jewish support he could not have become an elector, as in his election district Jews were clearly predominant, thus being on the Polish list, he simply could not have been elected. S. Khoronzitsky's letter to Maksim Moyseevich [Vinaver?] of 27 February 1906, RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 68, l. 105–106. In fact, Wróblewski became an elector without any problems.
- 50 Romm's letter of 15 February 1906 to the Central Committee of the Kadet party, GARF, f. 523, op. 1, d. 175, l. 15.

- 51 Before the first stage of the elections, Ze'ev (Vladimir) Zhabotinski was already certain that they would succeed in electing Levin. Zhabotinski's letter of 3 April, 1906 to M. M. (?), Central Zionist Archive (Jerusalem; CZA), A. 24. 18. 9, n.p. The second candidate—Oskar Gruzenberg—had briefly emerged. V. Levin, "Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections, 1906–1907," p. 254. Levin was even reproached by Polish figures of democratic views for being concerned with the interests of Jews rather than all inhabitants of the country. M. Römer, "Kandydatura nacyonalisty żydowskiego w Wilnie," *Gazeta Wileńska*, 1906, no. 37; M. Römer, "Wilno wobec wyborów," *ibid.*, no. 38; M. Römer, "Wybory w Wilnie," *ibid.*, no. 43; M. Römer, "Po prawyborach wileńskich," *ibid.*, no. 45. Interestingly enough, on 13 March 1906, the minister of home affairs received an anonymous complaint, in which Levin was named as the main revolutionary in Vilnius. File "On Doctor of Philosophy Shmariahu Levin," GARF, f. 102, DP-OO, 1906, II deloproizvodstvo, d. 311. However, it hardly caused serious problems for Levin. Apparently he was on good terms with the local administration. Having been elected to the Duma, he received greetings from the head of the chancellery of the Governor General of Vilnius Andrey Stankevich. Stankevich's letter of 19 April 1906 to Levin, CZA, A. 20. 79, n.p. Levin described his election in his memoirs; although many details in these memoirs are inaccurate. Sh. Levin, *The Arena* (London: Routledge, 1932), pp. 287–290; Sh. Levin, *Forward from Exile: The Autobiography of Shmarya Levin* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1967), pp. 402–406.
- 52 According to the 1897 general census of the Russian empire, only approximately 2 percent of the population of Vilnius indicated Lithuanian as their native language.
- 53 *Novaia zaria* noted that Jews would win success in the elections only if they actively participated in the election and did not become split (28 March 1906, no. 127). In other words, the Lithuanian factor was not mentioned as important.
- 54 It should be noted that Jewish electors conscientiously voted for Lithuanians, who, like the other candidates on this list, received the same number of votes—more than 1,000 ("Vybory v Vil'ne," *Novaia zaria*, 1906, no. 137). The actual number of Lithuanian electors became clear during the elections to the Second Duma, when Basanavičius received slightly more than ten votes in this district. "Vybory v Vilne," *Svobodnoe slovo*, 1907, no. 206.
- 55 J. Mykaitis, "Prie vaidų Vilniaus lietuvių su lenkais," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 87.
- 56 Interestingly enough, both election committees—Jewish and Lithuanian—indicated the same address.
- 57 "Sredi evreiskikh izbiratelei," *Novaia zaria*, 1906, no. 134.
- 58 J. Jablonskis, "Prie Vilniaus rinkimų," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 74; "Kronika miejska. Komitet wyborczy żydowski," *Gazeta Wileńska*, 1906, no. 39; "J. Vileišis's letter," *ibid.*, no. 41; "Głosy w sprawie porozumienia żydowsko-litewskiego," *ibid.*, no. 43; "Wybory. Wilno. Komitet wyborczy żydowski miejski w Wilnie," *Kurjer Litewski*, 1906, no. 76; J. Wilejszis, "W sprawie porozumienia żydowsko-litewskiego," *ibid.*; "W sprawie porozumienia żydowsko-litewskiego," *ibid.*, no. 78; "W sprawie porozumienia żydowsko-litewskiego," *ibid.*, no. 79.
- 59 After the elections, the Vilnius Bishop Ropp suspended the activity of the Ambrasiejus, indicating his support for the union with Jews during the elections, which aroused considerable dissatisfaction among Lithuanians. [J. Ambrasiejus], "Audiatur et altera pars," *Šviesa*, 1906, no. 7; "Vilniuje. Įdomus dokumentas," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 98;

- "Kauno lietuviai, Lietuvių protestas prieš Vilniaus lenkininkus," *ibid.*, no. 103; P. Matulionis, "Kreivas šūvis," *ibid.*, no. 106; "Za nedeliu," *Voskhod*, 1906, no. 17. There are a number of testimonies that on the election day several Lithuanians suffered from violent actions of Poles because of their support for Jews. "Liet. Komiteto Biuro dežurojas, Rinkimų dieną Vilniuje," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 75; L. Sim. [S. Norkus (Narkevičius)], "Rinkimai 'Dumon,'" *ibid.*, 1906, no. 76; J. Mykaitis, "Prie vaidų Vilniaus lietuvių su lenkais," *ibid.*, no. 87; "Vybory v Vilne," *Novaia zaria*, 1906, no. 136; letter of the chief editor of *Šviesa* J. Ambraziejus to Basanavičius of 2 May 1906, LLTI RS, f. 2, b. 1599, l. 1–2. The *Vilniaus žinios* wrote that before the elections, some Lithuanians received messages of the following content, "Remember, dog, if you vote for Jews, you'll receive a bullet in the head. From this day on, three of us will be aiming at you." "Vilniuje," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 73. The Polish press accused Lithuanian and Jewish figures of having caused these physical conflicts. "Wybory," *Kurjer Litewski*, 1906, no. 80.
- 60 M. [P. Matulionis], "Prie rinkimų. Vilniaus lietuvių-rinkikų sueiga," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 74. Povilas Matulionis also stressed that Jews and Lithuanians were united by their common difficult economic situation; besides, Jews had promised to support Lithuanians when they (Lithuanians) needed it.
- 61 S. K. [K. Skirmunt], "Z naszej tribuny. Posel Litwin," *Kurjer Litewski*, 1906, no. 33; "Kandydat litwinów i nasz," *ibid.*, no. 62; "Kandydatura Litewska," *ibid.*, no. 72; Wł. Rauba, "W Trokach," *ibid.*, no. 79; Pilyp [K. Žalys], "Gėda i 'Vilniaus Žinias' rašyti!," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 78.
- 62 B. Goldberg's letter to the Union's Central Bureau of 4 April 1906, RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 68, l. 122–124.
- 63 The Suwałki Jews complained about the illegal actions of the Polish National Democrats; File "Po zhalobe izbiratelei gor.[oda] Suvalkam i ego uezdu Movshi Rozentalia, Khaima Budzevicha, Moiseia Ivri i Shakhny Reingvirtsna na postanovlenie Suvalkskoi uezdnoi kommisii ot 11 aprelia 1906 goda," LVIA, f. 1085, ap. 1, b. 6.
- 64 J. Totoraitis, "Mūsų rinkimai," *Šaltinis*, 1906, no. 7, p. 98; "Wybory w Suwalkach," *Kurjer Litewski*, 1906, no. 93; "Rinkimai Suvalkuose," *Naujoji gadynė*, 1906, no. 1, p. 10; "Za nedeliu," *Novaia zaria*, 1906, no. 17.
- 65 Officials attentively observed the pre-election agitation and political constellation, and tried to neutralize the radicals; File "Gor. Vil'na i guberniia," GARF, f. 102, DP-OO, 1906, I otd., d. 725, ch. 11; "Kovenskaia guberniia," GARF, f. 102, DP-OO, 1906, I otd., d. 725, ch. 34.
- 66 V. Levin, "Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections, 1906–1907," p. 239.
- 67 Vladimir Levin counted eight parties that competed for the Jewish electors' votes; V. Levin, "Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections, 1906–1907," p. 239.
- 68 One of the Vilnius Jews wrote on the eve of the elections to the Second Duma, "I found everything here in a rather chaotic state. Some efforts need to be put into persuading Jews not to vote for Christians." Excerpt from J. Frumkin's (?) letter of 17 January 1907 to J. Hessen (Gessen), GARF, f. 102, DP-OO, 1906, I otd., d. 725, ch. 11, l. 9.
- 69 For more on the elections to the Second Duma, see N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," pp. 383–388; R. Jurkowski, *Sukcesy i porażki*, pp. 135–154, 162–170.
- 70 Wyborca [?], "Wybory w Kownie," *Dziennik Wileński*, 1907, no. 32; Michał Br[ensztein], "Wybory w Kownie. (Sprawozdanie własnego koresp. 'Kur.Lit.')." *Kurjer Litewski*, 1907, no. 31.

- 71 Election program [of the Landowners' Committee], LVIA, f. 1135, ap. 6, b. 20, l. 1. Besides, there were some landowners (e.g., Stanislovas Narutavičius [Stanisław Narutowicz]), who realized the undemocratic character of these requirements and thus did not agree with the program; minutes of the landowners' pre-election meeting on 24 January 1907 in Telšiai, LVIA, f. 1135, ap. 6, b. 20, l. 34–35.
- 72 Description of the meeting of 5 January 1907, LVIA, f. 1135, ap. 6, b. 20, l. 43; J.[P. Ruseckas], "Kauno lietuvių demokratų kuopos komitetas," *Lietuvos ūkininkas*, 1907, no. 2, p. 23.
- 73 "Šiauliai. (Rinkimų dalykai)," *Nedėldienio skaitymas*, 1906, no. 53, pp. 5–6; Kun. V. J. [V. Jarulaitis], "Prie rinkimų į dumą," *ibid.*, no. 54, p. 2; K. V. J. [V. Jarulaitis], "Pašnekesys apie rinkimus," *ibid.*, 1907, no. 4, pp. 25–26 ("One needs to know that wherever Jews may live, they are only concerned about their own business and protect it, and find other people's affairs important only as much as they affect them. Yet we can see that Jews never unite with other nations and remain Jews everywhere and always. For example, did Jews contribute in any way to Lithuanian culture, did any of them spend a penny for the affairs of our press and education? They only know how to use our wealth for their own advantage, and if anyone falls into their hands, he will remember them for life."); [Kun. V. Jarulaitis], "Atsakymas p. Iks. ant jo rašto," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 259; Kun. V. Jarulaitis, "Atsakymas p. Iks. ant jo rašto," *ibid.*, no. 261; "Prie rinkimų V. Dumon. Panevėžys," *ibid.*, no. 275; J. Kozakevičius, "Panevėžys (Kauno g.). Rinkimai V. Dumon," *Lietuvos ūkininkas*, 1906, no. 60, p. 718.
- 74 This, for example, happened in Šiauliai. J.[P. Ruseckas], "Dėlei rinkimų," *Lietuvos ūkininkas*, 1907, no. 5, pp. 65–66. However, several attempts to rally electors on the political rather than national basis did occur in Šiauliai. "Po kraui," *Svobodnoe slovo*, 1907, no. 185.
- 75 "Dėlei Bundo taktikos," *Skardas*, 1907, no. 4, p. 57. Some activists of the Union were afraid that the Bund and the LSDP would enter into a union. D.T. [?], "Kovenskaia gub. Gor. Novoaleksandrovsk," *Evreiskii izbiratel'*, 1907, no. 10, p. 16.
- 76 "Rinkimams besiantinant," *Naujoji gadynė*, 1906, no. 30, pp. 465–467; "Ką mums reikia į dumą rinkti," *Skardas*, 1907, no. 2, pp. 17–19.
- 77 J.[P. Ruseckas], "Dėlei rinkimų," *Lietuvos ūkininkas*, 1907, no. 5, pp. 65–66. Despite opposition from its branch in Raseiniai, Jewish Electoral Committee of the Kaunas province finally decided to support Zubov's candidature but only on the condition that he will back Kadet's program related to the "Jewish Question" and in electoral meeting of the Kaunas province will act together with other "representatives of the cities" (in other words, with the Jews). Copy of the letter from Kaunas Jewish Electoral Committee to the Šiauliai Committee, n.d.; letter from Jewish Electoral Committee in Raseiniai to the Šiauliai Committee, November 1906; YIVO (Yiddish Scientific Institute, New York), RG 2, Box 74, Folder 1448, pp. 66125, 66128. After the failure to reach an agreement between leftist parties Lithuanian Social Democrats published an appeal in Yiddish, accusing the Bund of betraying social ideals and serving for nationalists; "Der Shavel raioner komitet fun der litvisher sots. dem. partay, Tsu ale iidishe arbayer fun Shavel!" (January 1907), YIVO, RG 1400, ME 21, Folder 2, n.p.
- 78 "Panevėžys," *Skardas*, 1907, no. 4, p. 57; "Panevėžio paviete," *ibid.*, no. 5, p. 72; "Zarasai," *ibid.*, no. 6, pp. 87–88.

- 79 Description of the pre-election meeting on 26–28 December 1906 in Kaunas, RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 67, l. 125–127; “K vyboram v G. D.,” *Rassvet*, 1907, no. 3, p. 25..
- 80 “Nam pishut,” *Evreiskii izbiratel’*, 1906, no. 3, p. 8. The Union’s representatives from Raseiniai, also mentioned in this article, later denied these statements. M. Levi’s letter of 16 December 1906 to the editors of *Evreiskii izbiratel’*, RGIA, f. 1565, op.1, d. 242, l. 7.
- 81 M. Levi’s letter of 14 November 1906 to the Union’s election committee of the Kaunas *gubernia*, RGIA, f. 1565, op.1, d. 242, l. 12.
- 82 “Khronika,” *Nasha tribuna*, 1906, no. 2, p. 15.
- 83 M. Levi’s letter of 26 November 1906 to the Union’s Central Committee, RGIA, f. 1565, op.1, d. 242, l. 10.
- 84 Interestingly, on 19 August 1906 a former member of the Duma L. Bramson sought to establish contact with Basanavičius (Bramson’s letter of 19 August 1906 to a pharmacist [K. Anglinskas?], LLTI RS, f. 2, b. 757, l. 1). We can only guess that this wish to meet him could be related to the oncoming elections to the Second Duma, i.e., probably Bramson again expected Basanavičius’ support in the formation of a Lithuanian-Jewish bloc. In fact, there is no information if such a meeting took place, but starting on 6 September, *Vilniaus žinios* began to publish articles about the details of the first elections to the Duma in the Kaunas *gubernia* by Basanavičius.
- 85 J.[P. Ruseckas], “Kauno lietuvių demokratų kuopos komitetas,” *Lietuvos ūkininkas*, 1907, no. 2, p. 23; “Kaunas,” *ibid.*, no. 4, p. 55; M. Br.[ensztejn], “Akcja wyborcza w gub. kowieńskiej,” *Kurjer Litewski*, 1907, no. 27. According to Petras Leonas’s memoirs, final agreement was not reached because Lithuanians demanded more Lithuanian representatives to be elected into the *gubernia*’s election meeting, and Jews wanted to send two representatives into Duma. P. Leonas, “Dem likhtikn ondeynk fun Ozer Finkelshtein,” in *Zum ondenken fun O. Finkelshtein* (Kaunas, 1938), pp. LXXVII–LXXIX.
- 86 “Fun der vahl kampanie in kovner gubernie,” *Der nayer veg*, 1907, no. 25.
- 87 “Tolimesnieji rinkimū žinksniai,” *Skardas*, 1907, no. 5, p. 65. According to *Skardas*, there were talks in Raseiniai that “all the elected promised not to vote for noblemen and priests, and the one who will had not better return home,” “Iš Raseinių rašo,” *ibid.*, p. 72.
- 88 “Ką mums reikia į dumą rinkt,” *Skardas*, 1907, no. 2, p. 18.
- 89 A. Povylis, “Atsiminimai,” LLTI, f. 11, b. 215, p. 30. A. Povylis writes in his memoirs that peasants were inclined not to side “with noblemen or priests,” *ibid.*, p. 84.
- 90 Michał Br.[ensztejn], “Wybory w Kownie. (Sprawozdanie własnego koresp. ‘Kur. Lit.’),” *Kurjer Litewski*, 1907, no. 31; Wyborca[?], “Wybory w Kownie,” *Dziennik Wileński*, 1907, no. 32. In his memoirs A. Povylis writes that landowners hoped to win peasants over to their side easily by offering them money and vodka; A. Povylis, “Kalėjimas (Atsiminimai apie 1905 metų revoliuciją, rinkimus į II Dūmą, veiklą Dūmoje ir kt.),” LLTI, f. 11 b. 219, p. 31.
- 91 Vincas [V. Kapsukas], “Kauno gubernijos rinkimai,” *Skardas*, 1907, no. 7, pp. 100–102.
- 92 Description of the pre-election meeting that took place on 26–28 December 1906 in Kaunas, RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 67, l. 125–127; “Kovenskaia gub. (Gubernskoe soveshchanie),” *Evreiskii izbiratel’*, 1907, nos. 11–12. A member of the First Duma L. Bramson agitated for this union. The discussions were tainted with doubts if the union

- with peasants, who did not have clearly formed and strong organizations, could be stable. It was the agreements with the peasants' curia that also were included in the program of the Union's common tactics in the entire Western region; "Tsirkuliarnoe predlozhenie Tsentral'nogo komiteta obshchestva polnopraviia evreiskogo naroda v Rossii no. 7, 29 noiabria 1906 g.," *Evreiskii izbiratel'*, 1906, no. 1, p. 7.
- 93 em-es.[?], "Kovno," *Rassvet*, 1907, no. 6, p. 25–26..
- 94 According to Povylius, it was agreed that were Abramson not elected, V. Stašynskas, the sole Lithuanian candidate with higher education, should withdraw his candidacy as well; A. Povylius, "Atsiminimai," LLTI RS, f. 11, b. 215, p. 79.
- 95 M. Ž. [?], "Żydzi wileńscy," *Kurjer Litewski*, 1907, no. 15; "Wybory. Kandydatura Gruzenberga," *ibid.*, no. 16. The election committee of the Vilnius Jews led negotiations with democratically minded Russians as well, and shared with them the number of the submitted candidates (70 Jews and 10 Russians); "Wybory. Żydzi wileńscy," *Kurjer Litewski*, 1907, no. 14; "Wybory. W Wilnie. Blok żydowsko-rosyjski," *ibid.*, no. 18; "Wybory. W Wilnie. Kandydaci żydowscy," *ibid.*
- 96 "Pol'sko-evreiskie otnosheniia na vyborakh," *Voskhod*, 1906, no. 16, p. 6.; S. Aleksandrovich, "Zadachi evreiskogo predstavitel'stva," *Svobodnoe slovo*, 1906, no. 149.
- 97 "Zu dem rezultat fun di vahlen in vilne," *Folkstsaytung*, 1907, no. 273.
- 98 First the candidacy of the priest St. Maciejewicz who was supporter of National Democracy (Polish: Narodowa Demokracja, also known from its abbreviation ND as "Endecja") was submitted, but having realized that it would not draw the voices from people of other nationalities, a more moderate candidate was chosen.
- 99 Prominent Polish politicians residing in Vilnius did not react to K. Skirmuntt's invitation to build a joint Polish-Lithuanian election committee: K. Skirmuntt's letter of 17 October 1906 to Cz. Jankowski, LMAVB RS, f. 102, b. 121, l. 16–17.
- 100 Atsišaukimas nuo Vilniaus Lietuvių Rinkimo komiteto, *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, no. 255.
- 101 *Ibid.*
- 102 The very failure to use the ethnonym "Jew" may point to some uncertainty that Lithuanian electors would agree unconditionally with collaboration with Jews.
- 103 Although a Polish candidate was not clear and even T. Wróblewski's candidacy was discussed, A. Smetona wrote that Lithuanians might support both; Vilniškis [A. Smetona], "Vilnius," *Lietuvos ūkininkas*, 1906, no. 58. Later he was inclined to the idea that Lithuanians should submit their own candidates; Vilniškis [A. Smetona], "Dumos rinkimai Vilniuje," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1907, no. 15. Although the information that Jews and Lithuanians agreed to join forces already in the fall of 1906 had appeared in the press ("Vybory v Dumu," *Evreiskii golos*, 1906 no. 4, p. 12; "Vybory v Dumu," *Evreiskii golos*, 1906 no. 6, p. 24), later it was disclaimed ("Dnevnik," *Svobodnoe slovo*, 1906, no. 134.
- 104 Vilniškis [A. Smetona], "Dumos rinkimai Lietuvoje," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1907, no. 18.
- 105 Vilniškis [A. Smetona], "Dumos rinkimai Vilniuje," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1907, no. 15.
- 106 "Dumos rinkimai. Vilnius," *Vilniaus žinios*, 1907, no. 24; "Wybory. W Wilnie. Kandydat litwinów," *Kurjer Litewski*, 1907, no. 21.
- 107 J. Basanavičius received nineteen votes in the fourth district, with the other Lithuanians having worse results; in the fifth district they received one vote, and five votes in the sixth; "Vybory v Vilne," *Svobodnoe slovo*, 1907, no. 206. Thus, this time

- J. Basanavičius chose a different tactic than during the elections to the First Duma in the Kaunas *gubernia*, when he was trying by all means to form a union of Lithuanians and Jews. A hypothetical explanation could be offered. In Vilnius Lithuanians did not have any possibilities to elect a Lithuanian, thus a union with Jews could not give them any real advantage. All the more that the Jewish election committee proposed basically the same conditions for cooperation, i.e., to enlist Lithuanians in the districts where Poles had the most chance to win, “K vyboram v G.D.,” *Rassvet*, 1907, no. 3, p. 24.
- 108 L. A. [L. Abramowicz?], “Wobec epilogu,” *Kurjer Litewski*, 1907, no. 24.
- 109 Excerpt from a letter of 17 December 1906 from Vilnius addressed to R. A. Bender in Odessa, GARF, f. 102, DP-OO, 1906, I otd., d. 725, ch. 11, l. 4; “Korrespondentsii, Vilno,” *Evreiskii izbiratel*, 1906, no. 3, p. 10; L. R.[?], “Kultura ili chernosotenstvo?” *Severo-zapadnyi golos*, 1907, no. 350; “Iz obshchestvennoi zhizni,” *Nasha tribuna*, 1907, nos. 6–7; “Ver hot durkhgefihrt in vilno a reaktionsner?” *Folkstsaytung*, 1907, no. 274; R. Jurkowski, *Sukcesy i porażki*, p. 143. This question about additional district was raised by Jewish Committee during the election campaign; see appeals Tsu di iidishe izbirateles!; Libe brider! (October 1906), YIVO, RG 1400, ME 1, Box 38, Folder 293, pages unnumbered.
- 110 “Zu dem rezultat fun di vahlen in vilne,” *Folkstsaytung*, 1907, no. 273; M. P.[?], “Di ‘tmimes’ fun dem ‘fraynd’ in di vilner vahlen,” *Folkstsaytung*, 1907, no. 277. Mutual struggle was also named as the reason of the general failure of Jews on the imperial scale (only three Jewish deputies were elected); Sh. L.[?], “Zum politischen moment. Der rezultat fun di vahlen,” *Yidishe virklikhkayt*, 1907, no. 6, p. 6.
- 111 See M. P.[?], “Di ‘tmimes’ fun dem ‘fraynd’ in di vilner vahlen,” *Folkstsaytung*, 1907, no. 277.
- 112 “Vilniaus gubernijos atstovų rinkimai,” *Lietuvos ūkininkas*, 1907, no. 7, pp. 101–102; “Vilniaus gubernijos atstovų rinkimai,” *ibid.*, no. 8, pp. 115–117.
- 113 “Vilniuje. Valstiečių rinkimų komitetas,” *Vilniaus žinios*, 1907, no. 4.
- 114 S. Aleksandrovich, “Zadachi evreiskogo predstavitel’sstva,” *Svobodnoe slovo*, 1907, no. 150.
- 115 Landowners and peasants who were under their influence were elected to the Duma; “Vilniaus gub. Rinkimai,” *Skardas*, 1907, no. 7, pp. 103–104; “Wybory do Dumy,” *Dziennik wileński*, 1907, no. 28; “Wybory posła z gubernji Wileńskiej,” *ibid.*, no. 29; “Przebieg wyborów gubernjalnych wileńskich,” *Kurjer Litewski*, 1907, no. 29; Kun. J. Tumas, “Vilnius, 7 d. vasario 1907 m.,” *Vilniaus žinios*, 1907, no. 31; N. Ūdrėnas, “Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip,” pp. 390–392.
- 116 Letter of the Priėnai rabbi A. Raines of 18 November 1906 to the Union’s Central Committee, RGIA, f. 1565, op. 1, d. 68, l. 145–146.
- 117 “Dumos rinkimai. Naumiestis,” *Vilniaus žinios*, 1907, no. 21.
- 118 Lietuvis [Z. Puidokas?], “Dumos rinkimai. Kalvarija,” *Vilniaus žinios*, 1907, no. 24. The Bund expected that it would succeed in making an agreement with Lithuanians and sending to the Duma not only one Lithuanian, but also one Jew; “Suvalkskaia gubernskaia konferentsia izbiratel’nykh biuro Bunda,” *Nasha tribuna*, 1907, no. 3, p. 31.
- 119 “Suvalkų gub. Rinkimai,” *Skardas*, 1907, no. 7, pp. 102–103.
- 120 Similar marriage of convenience took place between Jews and Ukrainians, when they joined their efforts against Poles during the 1907 parliamentary elections in Austrian

Galicja: J. Shanes and Y. Petrovsky Shtern, "An Unlikely Alliance: The 1907 Ukrainian–Jewish Electoral Coalition," *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 3, 2009, pp. 483–505.

- 121 A. Eidintas and R. Lopata, eds., *Lietuvos valstybės tarybos protokolai 1917–1918* (Vilnius: Mokslo, 1991), p. 463.

LITHUANIANS IN JEWISH POLITICS OF THE LATE IMPERIAL PERIOD

VLADIMIR LEVIN

At the beginning of the twentieth century, one of the most important centers of Jewish politics in the Russian empire was situated in Vilnius, nowadays the capital of the independent Lithuanian state. Surprisingly, the Lithuanians occupied only a marginal place in Jewish political discourse, especially compared to Poles and the Polish question.

This article analyzes how various Jewish political forces treated the Lithuanian question, Lithuanian national movements, political and national demands, as well as their attitudes toward the Lithuanians. The article concentrates on the late Imperial period, that is the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, when modern political movements emerged and developed among Jews and Lithuanians.

The emergence of the national movements took place in the rather traditional societies, which were accustomed to live side by side for centuries but developed little interest in each other. For Lithuanian peasants Jews were strangers, both as non-Christians and as townspeople, engaged in non-agricultural activities as traders and artisans.¹ For Jews, all surrounding people were simply Christians, and the differentiation ran along social lines: backward peasants, local nobility (in majority of cases the owners of the *shtetls* where the Jews resided), and omnipotent government officials. The genuine close contacts with Lithuanians developed usually only among those Jews who lived in villages—the numerically small and socially non-prestigious group.²

Traditional East-European Jewish society was in significant degree closed for the gentile cultural influences. When this society began to disintegrate in the second half of the nineteenth century, Jews opted for the Imperial Russian culture (or highly developed Polish), not the Lithuanian one. The Lithuanian acculturation was both unattractive and practically impossible, because there was no “high” Lithuanian cultural sphere or Lithuanian schools. As a result, the highly acculturated or even “assimi-

lated” Jewish intelligentsia, which played an important role in the Russian and Polish political spheres, was absent from the Lithuanian movements. In addition, the ban on Lithuanian printing in Latin characters removed Lithuanian literature from the public sphere of the northwest region; Lithuanian newspapers and books smuggled from abroad could hardly find their way to the potential Jewish readers.³

The contacts between the Jewish and Lithuanian intelligentsia were minimal. Even in the school years, which were formative for establishing close interethnic relations, Jews and Lithuanians were divided, as, for example, is testified by a leader of the Bund, John Mill, who studied in the secondary school in Panevėžys during the 1880s. According to Mill, “A thick wall of distrust and traditional antipathy stood between the national groups of the students. Especially secluded were Lithuanians, even from Poles... For seven years during which I had studied ..., I did not become a friend with a single Lithuanian [student].”⁴

This absence of social contacts between Jews and Lithuanians and ignorance of the Lithuanian language was used, for example, by a Zionist journalist Avraham Idelson, born in Žagarė, when he wanted to make obvious that Jews tend to socialize among themselves and not with gentiles: “I do not know how to speak Lithuanian and therefore I come close with people, who speak Yiddish [*po-evreiski*].”⁵

Non-acculturation of Jews into the local peasant cultures was common for Eastern Europe in general and for the Russian Pale of Settlement in particular (although knowledge of Russian made easier comprehension of the Ukrainian and Belarusian languages). What differentiated the ethnic Lithuanian territory from the rest of the Pale was absence of the large-scale anti-Jewish pogroms during the pogrom waves of 1881–1882 and 1905. However, the fact that the Jews in the northwest did not suffer physically like the Jews in Ukraine hardly influenced their attitude toward Lithuanians. First, the anti-Jewish violence, although on a small scale, took place during both pogrom waves as well as in 1900–1901.⁶ Second, the anti-Jewish violence was expected during the critical periods.⁷ Third, the strong belief of the local population in blood libel contained a very real potential of a violent outburst. Finally, the rhetoric of Jewish politicians of the early twentieth century blamed czarist officials, not the masses, for organizing pogroms, so that the role of the local population in conducting or non-conducting anti-Jewish violence was usually perceived as minimal.

The Lithuanian national movement in all its currents developed in the late nineteenth century in the underground; thus, it could hardly attract attention of the general Jewish public (and Russian too). Therefore, when

the Lithuanian national demands were openly put forward during the 1905 Revolution, they came as a surprise and it took time for the Jewish public to acknowledge them. Thus, the Vilnius Great Assembly on 21–22 November 1905, which formulated the demand for Lithuanian autonomy, passed unnoted by Jewish press.⁸

Although the aspirations of Poles for independence were widely known to the Russian (and Russian-Jewish) public, and the demand for Polish autonomy was generally recognized by all oppositional circles in Russia, the similar Lithuanian demand caused the feeling of astonishment. However, it also aroused respect among Jewish nationalists. For instance, Yosef Klausner—one of the leading Zionist publicists—brought Lithuanians as an example of the fair national claims of the territorial nationalities, as opposed to the “exaggerated” national demands of the Jewish “Diaspora nationalists,” whom he fiercely criticized in early 1906: “Read the demands that were presented ... by such a small and young, in every respect people, as Lithuanians. First of all, they demand ... the recognition of their nationality and language, the special Lithuanian *sejm*, and even the attachment of the Suwałki province to Lithuania is not forgotten... These are the demands of Lithuanians, these are approximately the demands of other peoples.”⁹

On their behalf, the Jewish “Diaspora nationalists” also paid attention to the existence of Lithuanian demands. Thus, the program of Simon Dubnow’s Folks-partey in December 1906 copied almost exactly the program of the Russian Constitutional-Democratic Party (Kadets), but introduced an explicit mention of Lithuanians. While the first paragraph of the Kadet program said “all restrictions on personal and property rights of Poles, Jews and all other groups of population without exception, have to be cancelled,” the Folks-partey repeated this clause with change: “all restrictions on personal and property rights of Jews, Poles, Lithuanians and all other groups of population without exception, have to be cancelled.”¹⁰

The openness of the Jewish politicians, in contrast to their Russian counterparts, to Lithuanian demands, was a clear consequence of meeting with Lithuanian parties during the elections to the State Duma in the Kaunas province. However, before the 1905 Revolution, the frankest relations between different national groups developed in the sphere of underground revolutionary activities: having a common enemy, employing similar means, and principally professing internationalism, the revolutionaries of different ethnic origin could exchange opinions without restraints of legality and censorship. For instance, the Lithuanian Social

Democrats were the first to demand separation of Lithuania from Russia, and the Jewish Labor Bund was the first Jewish party who had to cope with this demand.

The Jewish Labor Bund

At the height of its strength and influence in Czarist Russia the Jewish Labor Bund was known under the name of the General Jewish Workers' Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia, being the only Jewish organization with the word "Lithuania" in its title. However, this fact cannot be counted as the explicit recognition of Lithuanian national aspirations.

When the Bund—the first Jewish political party in the Russian empire—was being established by its first congress in Vilnius in 1897, two proposals for its name were discussed. The "father of the Bund" Arkadii Kremer wanted the new organization to be titled "General Jewish Workers' Union in Russia," while John Mill insisted on adding "and Poland."¹¹ Mill was an organizer of the Jewish labor movement in Warsaw, which met with strong opposition from the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). The PPS combined socialism with strong nationalism and the demand of independence of Poland was no less important for it than the demands about reorganization of the society along socialist lines.¹² Leading the immediate struggle with Polish socialists, Mill was much more aware of the nationalities question than other leaders of the Bund. He recognized the existence and strength of Polish national aspirations and demanded mentioning the Polish territory specifically.¹³ Mill's suggestion was accepted and thus the Bund declared that it is the national party of the Jewish proletariat and not a regional party operating in Yiddish; that it works among all Jewish workers of the Russian empire and is not restricted by the regional borders.¹⁴ At the same time, by accepting such a decision, the Bund recognized *de facto* that Poland is not a part of Russia, but a separate historical and political entity. In 1897 the Bund leaders did not recognize that by describing the territories where the Bund works as Russia and Poland, they reduced the meaning of "Russia" in the Bund's title from an imperial to a regional context. By this name they meant not the empire as a whole, but the northwestern region, which comprised ethnic Lithuania and Belarus, where the Jewish labor movement flourished at this time (there have been yet no Bund's organizations on the territory of modern Ukraine).

It took four more years until such recognition was made. In 1901, the fourth congress of the Bund changed the party's name to the General Jew-

ish Workers' Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia.¹⁵ According to Mill, it was made "with an aim to mention the whole territory, on which [the Bund] was active."¹⁶ This time again a proposal was made to restrict the geographical part of the Bund's name to "Russia," meaning by this the Russian empire as a state. However, as the report about the congress noted, such change "could cause an assumption that the Bund refuses to work in Poland."¹⁷ Thus, the concept that the Kingdom of Poland is a separate part of the empire and cannot be included under the term Russia was already well established in the consciousness of the Bund's leaders. The special mentioning of "Lithuania" in the title was hence a consequence of the non-possibility to exclude "Poland": "If one wishes, as the founders of the Bund did, to distinguish the 'indigenous' regions [of Russia] from the borderlands, it is strange why Lithuania (here, as known, the Jewish labor movement is most strongly developed) is classified as 'indigenous' Russia."¹⁸ Thus, the recognition of Lithuania as a borderland was made clear. However, this "Lithuania" was equal not to ethnic Lithuania, but to Jewish "Lita"—a distinct geographical-cultural area in the Jewish mental map of Eastern Europe, a remnant of the Great Duchy of Lithuania, equal to the Russian northwestern region, comprising more or less ethnic Lithuania and Belarus. The order of the geographical names in the title of the Bund expressed "the order in which the historical development of the Jewish labor movement went" as well as the fact that "its strength is greatest in Lithuania and smallest in 'Russia.'"¹⁹ Thus, "Russia" in this case again meant not the state and not ethnic or historical Russia, but southern Russia—the territory at the south of the Pale of Settlement, which today is part of Ukraine. No references were made to Ukraine as such; only the historical provinces of Podolia and Volhynia were mentioned during the discussion.²⁰

How did historians explain the name change? According to Moshe Mishkinsky, "[u]ndoubtedly, the name of the Polish party, Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) [adapted in 1900], also played a role in the naming of the Bund." The SDKPiL, which united the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and the Workers Association in Lithuania, "was increasingly inclined to regard itself as a territorial organization"—a Socialist party that works among the workers of all ethnic origin in a given territory. Alternatively, the fourth congress of the Bund emphasized that SDKPiL is a party of one of the nations living in the Russian empire, the Poles, and not a territorial party. "The same tendency came to the fore in the inclusion of the name 'Lithuania' in the name of the Bund"—the party of the Jewish proletariat.²¹ Mishkinsky also

stressed “a factual shrinkage of the concept Russia to Southern Russia, [where] the Bund had taken its first steps and its rights to organize there were challenged by the ‘Iskra’ wing of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party [RSDRP].”²² Thus, the word “Russia” in the title meant the Bund’s right “to conduct its work in every corner of the Russian empire, where there is a Jewish proletariat.”²³ Mishkinsky concluded that “the problem of party structure ... was linked with the political problem of national autonomy and the ideological assumption that the Jews were a nation.”²⁴

Mishkinsky’s work, originally published in 1969,²⁵ did not mention any Lithuanian context of the Bund’s change of the name in 1901. In 2004 Joshua Zimmerman referred to Lithuanians, although only as one of the reasons for this name change: “The addition of ‘Lithuania’ to the title was both the result of the emerging Lithuanian nationalist movements as well as a desire to renounce claims to Lithuanian soil by the PPS, which at that time was increasing its activities in Lithuania. It may also have been the result of repeated PPS reminders that the Bund was agitating not ‘in Russia,’ but ‘in Poland and Lithuania.’”²⁶ Thus, both historians stress the Polish context of mentioning “Lithuania,” and not the Lithuanian one. Again, there was no intention to speak about ethnic Lithuania: the historical Great Duchy was implied, like in the name of SDKPiL and in the agitation of PPS. Both historians mention the Polish socialist parties while omitting the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP).

The Jewish Labor Bund and the LSDP had many things in common. Both appeared in Vilnius in the 1890s and the legitimacy of both was questioned by Polish socialists.²⁷ Both agitated among social groups, which could not be regarded as proletariat in the classical Marxist sense: the Bund worked among craftsmen and the LSDP among peasants. The national programs of both parties—the Bund’s national-cultural autonomy for Jews and LSDP’s independent Lithuania in a federation with neighboring countries—met opposition from other socialists within the Russian empire.²⁸

The Bund also disliked the demand of Lithuanian independence, in a similar way as it regarded the idea of the independence of Poland. For the Bund leaders (as for many Jewish politicians), the dissolution of the Russian empire was undesirable. The Bundists saw the primary goal of the socialists as overthrow of the Russian absolutism, which could be achieved only by joint effort. And there was no guarantee that in the new nation-states, like Poland, Lithuania, and others, Jews would gain civil and especially national rights. Therefore, the Bund favored a democratic

larger Russian state, with territorial self-rule for the areas with non-Russian population.²⁹ In 1901, the Bund adopted the idea of extraterritorial national-cultural autonomy for every national group and since 1904 proposed it as the “adequate answer for the nationalities question.”³⁰ The sixth congress of the Bund in October 1905 reaffirmed the demand for the national-cultural autonomy and explicitly rejected the idea of Polish independence, proposing instead “wide territorial self-government.”³¹ An explanatory article in *Der Bund* warned that even in autonomous and democratic Poland there would be no guaranties that “Jews, Lithuanians and Germans” would “have a possibility to develop their culture freely.”³²

The Bund’s sixth congress also condemned the demand of separate constituent assemblies in different national regions. Although the congress’ resolution targeted mainly the PPS and its claim for a separate constituent assembly in Warsaw, it was formulated in general language, thus implicitly including, inter alia, the demand for the Lithuanian *sejm* in Vilnius.³³ In an article explaining this decision, Vladimir Kossovsky stated that the demand for a constituent assembly for Poland is based on the right of self-determination, thus the same right belongs to “Lithuanians, Latvians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Georgians etc.,” that is, each territory would have its own constituent assembly, parallel to the all-Russian one in St. Petersburg. “The simultaneous existence of a series of sovereign constituent assemblies in different places of Russia ... will break down the powers of revolution and open wide possibilities for the contra-revolutionary efforts of reaction,”³⁴ stated Kossovsky, and ensured that “Poles would have much more chances to secure the realization of their desires” in the all-Russian constituent assembly than in the conciliatory commission of different territorial assemblies.³⁵ The article ends with the statement “what we have said about Poland is true for every other territory of the Russian state.”³⁶ Thus, the Polish case served as a base on which the Bund’s leadership developed its opinions on the demands of different nationalities of the Russian empire. However, these decisions did not prevent a Bund member to greet the Great Vilnius Assembly in late November 1905 “in flawless Lithuanian.”³⁷

The relationships of the Bund with Polish socialist parties working in Lithuania were extremely tense. Initially, the Bund was engaged in a bitter struggle with PPS until its split in 1906; after that PPS-Left drew closer to the Bund and both parties even formed a full-scale electoral alliance in 1912.³⁸ The relations with SDKPiL were quite good in the beginning, but deteriorated after 1906.³⁹ The strongly internationalist SDKPiL became a part of the RSDRP and supported Bolsheviks in the fractional struggle,

while the Bund became more national-minded and allied with the Mensheviks.⁴⁰ However, the rivalry with the Polish parties took place mainly in the Kingdom of Poland and was concentrated, besides theoretical questions, around the existence of separate Bund organizations in the Polish cities.

The relations of the Bund with the LSDP were devoid of the tensions that characterized the relations with the Polish parties. The very different fields of work did not cause clashes, while the differences regarding the Lithuanian independence were downplayed. Lithuanian Social Democrats did not reject the Bund's right of existence, and the fact that LSDP did not join the RSDRP also eased the relations; there were no fractional rivalries, as in the case with the SDKPiL. Conversely, the connections of the Bund with the LSDP were not as friendly as with the Latvian Social Democracy.⁴¹

In the early 1890s the leaders of the future Bund and LSDP conducted friendly personal relations and supported each other. However, different spheres of activity and socialization and growing involvement in the everyday life of one's own party diminished the contacts between them.

The founders of the LSDP—Alfonsas Moravskis and Andrius Domaševičius—were influenced by a leader of the proto-Bundist Jewish movement Tsemakh Kopelzon in their native Panevėžys in the summer of 1889. This meeting, according to Domaševičius, made a “deep impression,” “contributing ... to the beginnings of Marxian activity among the Lithuanians.”⁴² The close contact between Domaševičius and another Bund leader, John Mill, developed in the same town in the 1880s and continued in the later years: “In Vilnius [in the early 1890s], writes Mill in his memoirs, I saw him often—Arkadi Kremer and I used to visit him in connection with different party matters. Each time when he came to Warsaw [in the late 1890s] we had many [matters] to speak about and to debate about. In 1932, when I passed through Panevėžys, I spent a couple of pleasant days in his company and in the company of his son.”⁴³

Shmuel Gozhansky testified to Domaševičius's influence on the leaders of the Jewish socialist movement in the early 1890s. Counting the reasons of the transition from “propaganda” to “agitation” in the proto-Bundist movement⁴⁴ Gozhansky said:

The second fact is our acquaintance with two revolutionaries of that time, Domaševičius and Trusiewicz. What gave us the acquaintance with those comrades? To what did they draw our attention? They used to say: “You want to organize the groups of Jewish workers, to prepare revolutionaries, and what are you doing? You teach them first of all the Russian language.” They pointed out: “Your words are good, but in reality you are simply engaged in the russification of the region and by this you ful-

fill certain assignments of the czarist government.” All that forced us to think about this question very seriously.⁴⁵

According to Yulii Martov, who spent 1893–1895 in Vilnius,

We gravitated toward St. Petersburg and Moscow, they [Polish-Lithuanian revolutionary intelligentsia]—toward Warsaw. The propaganda among Polish and Lithuanian workers in Vilnius conducted by some persons and study groups from the early 1890s went separately from ours, but our group maintained certain contacts with the leaders of that propaganda... In the festive occasions, as First of May, both groups organized joint workers' meetings, sometimes the leaders-workers from the same profession met in order to coordinate their actions in the economic struggle. We often met with the propagandists themselves, exchanging information and illegal literature. The leading figures among those propagandists were a former student from Kazan Moravskis and Dr. Domaševičius—a blonde of impressive look with glaringly white teeth, which had great influence and popularity among the local Left intelligentsia... In the winter of 1894–95, Trusiewicz ... began to play the main role among Polish-Lithuanian groups... [H]e was the bearer of certain Marxist ideology in ... the Polish-Lithuanian milieu. This brought him closer to us. From his side, Trusiewicz strived after us, aspiring to introduce into local propaganda those realistic elements, on which our work was based after we put the economic agitation in its center.⁴⁶

In the 1890s, the Lithuanian Social Democrats used in their agitation Gozhansky's discovery of an eighteenth-century law, which restricted artisans' working day to twelve hours.⁴⁷ In 1895, among other preparations for the establishment of the LSDP, Moravskis, Domaševičius, and Stanisław Trusiewicz held consultations with Kopelzon and Gozhnasky about uniting their movements into one party, but the leaders of the proto-Bundist movement refused.⁴⁸ In 1898, when the Bund took a leading role in the establishment of the RSDRP, one of the Bund's leaders—Vladimir Kossovsky—negotiated with the Lithuanian Social Democrats their joining the all-Russian party. According to the memoirs of Arkadi Kremer, the Lithuanians refused, demanding that the all-Russian party be built as a federation of national parties, thus anticipating the demands of the Bund several years later.⁴⁹ When after the first congress of the RSDRP the Central Committee of the Bund was arrested, the Lithuanian Social Democrats (mainly Domaševičius), according to Dovid Kats (Taras), assisted the Bund in smuggling illegal literature from abroad.⁵⁰ At the same time, Kats testified that the contacts with the Lithuanian Social Democrats (and with the PPS) at the turn of the century “were rare and there have been no regular connections.”⁵¹

Although the LSDP concentrated mainly on organizing Christian workers and peasants, in 1907 it had about 380 Jewish members, mostly

from the Lithuanian branch of the PPS, which united with the LSDP in November 1906.⁵² The LSDP made arrangements for a special Jewish committee, which designated a citywide Jewish district in its administrative structure in Vilnius and attempted to publish a legal Yiddish weekly *Di arbiter shtime fun lite* in April–May 1907 (only five issues saw light), and an illegal Yiddish non-periodical paper *Sotsialistishes flugblat* in December 1906 (four issues were published by the summer of 1907).⁵³ However, the LSDP actions were not perceived as a serious threat to the Bund's influence among the Jewish workers.

During the 1905 Revolution the Bund and the LSDP organized demonstrations, strikes, meetings, and other revolutionary mass activities.⁵⁴ After 1905, the relations between the Bund and the LSDP usually found public expression during the electoral campaigns to the Russian State Duma. Both parties boycotted the elections to the First Duma in the spring of 1906 but participated in the subsequent campaigns.

In the elections to the Second Duma in the winter of 1906–1907 the Bund and LSDP, although having no formal agreement, supported each other. In Kaunas, for instance, the Bund's candidate Rafail Abramovich (Rein) was supported by "all socialist organizations in the Kaunas province, including also the Lithuanian SD."⁵⁵ However, Vladimir Lenin accused the Bund of allying itself with the local Jewish Electoral Committee "against the Lithuanian Social Democrats."⁵⁶ The Bund and the Zionist-Socialist Workers Party indeed signed an agreement with the Jewish Committee in the last stage of the campaign, receiving two electors in the city of Kaunas. The Jewish Committee list included a leader of the Bund Abramovich, a leader of the Zionist-Socialists party Nahman Syrkin, four members of the Union for the Achievement of the Full Rights for the Jewish People in Russia, and Władysław Staszyński (Stašynskas), described as a "progressive Lithuanian"—that is a non-socialist.⁵⁷ In Vilnius, the LSDP joined the left bloc of Bund and RSDRP, promised to support the Bund's candidate, but "showed no activity."⁵⁸ However, this promise was important for the Bund leaders, who stressed the belonging of Bund's activists to the all-Russian and international socialist movement.⁵⁹ Bund activists also hoped to elect, in the Suwałki province, "one Bundist and one oppositional Lithuanian deputy" with the help of the "Lithuanian oppositional peasants."⁶⁰

During the elections to the Third Duma in the fall of 1907 both parties cooperated again, but without forming a formal bloc. Thus, in Vilnius, a joint "information bureau" was established by the Bund and LSDP, together with other socialists.⁶¹ On the contrary, local Lithuanian Social Democrats

refused to establish a joint bureau with the Bund in Panevėžys, accusing the latter of cooperating with the “bourgeois” Jewish Committee.⁶²

In the elections to the Third Duma in the urban curia, the only known example of cooperation between the Bund and LSDP was a Jewish dentist Hirsh Karpel, their joint candidate, who won as the urban elector from Šiauliai.⁶³ However, this cooperation was of low importance to the Bund. In the report to the Socialist International Congress in Copenhagen in 1910 the electoral alliances with the Latvian and Polish SD in Liepāja and Łódź were explicitly noted, while the LSDP was not mentioned.⁶⁴

The two parties directly competed during the elections in the workers' curia, where each socialist party acted independently. Those elections were conducted in three stages. First, the workers in a factory with more than fifty workers elected a “representative.” Second, the “representatives” from all factories of the province elected workers' electors. Third, those electors joined the provincial assembly of the electors from all curiae and voted for the deputies to the Duma. In the elections to the Third Duma, among thirty-eight workers' representatives in the province of Vilnius there were fourteen candidates of the LSDP and eight Bundists. According to the Bund's newspaper, nobody expected the Lithuanian victory, but because they had the largest number of “representatives,” the joint candidate of the Bund and RSDRP removed his candidature, and a Lithuanian Social Democrat was elected as the workers' elector.⁶⁵ In the Grodno province, where two workers' electors had to be elected, seven or nine “representatives” belonged to the LSDP, while the Bund had only three and the Zionist-Socialists four. During the voting for the electors, a candidate of the RSDRP received thirteen votes and a Christian candidate of the LSDP received fourteen votes. However, the last one refused in order to allow a Jewish member of the LSDP—Shloma Kapulskii who received eleven votes—to become an elector, as it was decided by the preliminary consultation of the Bund, the Zionist-Socialists and the LSDP.⁶⁶

Only during the campaign for the Fourth Duma in 1912, did the Bund and LSDP sign a formal electoral alliance. Both parties, although preserving their rights for independent agitation, declared their aspiration of joint actions. Their candidates were obliged to join the Social Democratic Faction of the Duma. The parties also found a common interest besides the general socialist outlook: “Because of the special importance of the question about the rights of native languages, both parties stress in their electoral agitation the necessity of the struggle for the full rights of native languages (Lithuanian, Yiddish, Polish etc.) in all spheres of the state and public life. The candidates of the both parties are obliged to protect the

rights of native languages in Duma with especial determination.”⁶⁷ The attempt to realize this alliance in practice was made in Kaunas. While the “bourgeois” Jewish Committee was in favor of the “technical” agreement with the Lithuanians, where each side nominates its candidates, the Bund insisted on the joint nomination of the Jewish and Lithuanian candidates, counting that the left-wing Lithuanians would give priority to its candidate, I. S. Uryson.⁶⁸ At the end, Uryson was disqualified by the authorities, and the nominee of the Jewish Committee Naftali Fridman was elected as the Jewish deputy.

It is possible to conclude that the twenty-year side-by-side existence on the same territory did not cause the Bund and the LSDP to establish a close relationship. The Bund assigned much greater importance to its place in the All-Russian Social Democratic Labor Party and to its struggle with the Polish socialists in the major industrial centers, than to the local Lithuanian party, which never challenged either the Bund’s right of existence or its exclusive influence among the Jewish workers.⁶⁹ Only by 1912, the shift of the emphasis from the social to the national matters allowed both parties to recognize that they have, beyond general socialist demands, other common tasks, such as “the rights of native languages.”

The Jewish-Lithuanian Electoral Alliance

The most important points of meeting of Jewish politicians with Lithuanians and the Lithuanian “question” were the elections to the Russian State Duma. As already stated, Jewish and Lithuanian politicians cooperated in all four electoral campaigns to the Duma between 1906 and 1912. Those elections were neither general nor direct, but the majority of the adult male population was indeed enfranchised. All voters were divided into four curiae according to the kind of property they had or occupation they engaged in: curia of peasants, curia of landowners, urban and workers’ curiae. In the first stage of the elections, the voters of each curia separately chose the electors, in the numbers assigned by the law to each curia in each province. In the second stage, the electors gathered in the provincial electoral assemblies and chose the members of the Duma from their midst. Therefore, the electoral alliances could be made in the first stage, but more commonly they were contracted between different groups of electors before the electoral assembly.

“Lithuanians” and “Jews”⁷⁰ were objectively placed on the “progressive,” “oppositional” side of the Russian political spectrum. “Jews” de-

manded legal emancipation and therefore only “oppositional” political parties could support them. “Lithuanians,” too, aroused sympathy among the “progressives.” They were mainly peasants, oppressed by the Polish landlords in the social sense and by the Russian government and the Poles in the national sense. The positions of many Lithuanian politicians were “progressive” as well. All this made the “Lithuanians” a natural part of any “progressive” alliance in the northwestern region, which could include the Russian and Polish “democrats,” “Jews,” and “Belarusians.” Jewish electors of different political convictions could vote for Lithuanian candidates without feeling as though they support an unjust case for the sake of electing a Jewish deputy. However, the electoral alliances in the northwestern region (and elsewhere in the borderlands) were extremely complicated, involving social/class, national and religious considerations vis-à-vis pragmatic approach aiming to send to the Duma a deputy representing a specific group.

The most prominent place where the Jewish-Lithuanian alliance existed was the Kaunas province, where the Lithuanian-Jewish majority sent a Jewish deputy to all four Dumas. The social composition of the population in this province paralleled the ethnic one: the peasants were almost exclusively Lithuanians, the absolute majority of the landowners were Poles, and the most significant and numerically strong urban group—Jews. Hence, the Russian electoral law, by division of the voters into curiae according to the type of their property, determined that the peasant electors will be exclusively Lithuanians, the electors from the landowners’ curia will be Poles, and the electors from the urban curia will be Jews (there was no workers’ curia in the Kaunas province). Therefore it is not surprising that in order to win elections two homogeneous groups of electors had to reach agreement against a third group.

However, the possibility of the alliance between “Jews” and “Lithuanians” in the elections to the First Duma in the winter of 1906 was not self-evident. Both groups had different approaches and did not trust each other.⁷¹ In the beginning, Jewish representatives demanded two mandates from the province and were ready to vote only for the left-wing Lithuanian Democrats and not for the Lithuanian National Democrats.⁷² Jonas Basanavičius, who in fact managed the electoral politics of the Lithuanian group, wrote that Jews “remained an alien nation for us just as they were before” and turned to negotiations with the Polish landlords.⁷³ The Polish option also existed for “Jews,” as the Jewish electors concluded blocs with Polish landowners, which won in the Kiev, Minsk, and Vitebsk provinces and lost in Podolia.⁷⁴ In the end, the self-confidence and lack of flexibility

of the Polish landlords, on the one hand, and the reduction of the Jewish demand to one mandate, on the other hand, allowed for an agreement with Lithuanians. The Jewish-Lithuanian alliance was decided a day before the elections in a meeting between Basanavičius and the leading Jewish electors Oyzer Finkelshtein from Kaunas, Fishel Khonokh from Raseiniai, and Leon Bramson from St. Petersburg.⁷⁵ As a result, Bramson and five Lithuanians were elected to the First Duma. In the Duma, Bramson—a prominent Jewish activist of moderate socialist Weltanschauung—became a leader of the Trudovik faction. His left-wing outlook fitted other deputies from the province. Two elected Lithuanian peasants (Juozas Kubilius and Laurynas Lopas) also joined the Trudovik faction, while two others (a priest Vincentas Jarulaitis and a peasant Juozapas Sabalis) joined the Autonomist group and the landowner Czesław Milwid (Milvydas) joined the Kadet faction.⁷⁶ The success of the 1906 alliance made it easier to reach agreements in the subsequent electoral campaigns.

Because of signing the Vyborg Manifesto—the appeal of the members of the dissolved First Duma, calling not to pay taxes and avoid draft to the army—Bramson lost his political rights and could not participate in the elections to the Second Duma in 1907. Thus, a Kaunas lawyer Shakhna Abramson was elected as the Jewish deputy from the province by the same Jewish-Lithuanian majority. Taking into account that in 1907 the Jewish liberals demanded election of Jewish deputies by blocs solely with peasants, who was considered “progressive” in general, and not with “reactionary” landowners,⁷⁷ the Kaunas campaign was especially successful. Abramson, who adhered to the Jewish liberal camp, joined the Kadet faction in the Duma, while all five Lithuanian deputies—members of the LSDP—joined the Social Democrats.⁷⁸ The discrepancy in the party affiliation of the Kaunas deputies was a consequence of the “technical” character of the bloc, where each side nominated its own candidates independently.⁷⁹

However, the electoral alliance in February 1907 was not purely “technical” and included the explicit expression of Jewish solidarity with the Lithuanian claim for autonomy. A conference of Jewish electors in the Kaunas province with the “representatives of the Jewish population from each uezd” gathered before the provincial electoral assembly and had to formulate its stand about the Lithuanian autonomy. According to a report in the official Zionist weekly *Rassvet*,

some orators, even those who strived to be [elected as] deputies, spoke against the autonomy of Lithuania, at the same time supporting the widest self-rule [for this coun-

try], because the autonomy of such a non-cultured people may have pernicious influence on the interests of Jews in this region. Other orators did not see this danger for Jews because of Jews' higher level of culture in comparison with Lithuanians, who only start to live a conscious national life. The dominant majority of the conference accepted the apt resolution of the advocate Abramson, which proposed to the Jewish deputies to defend the autonomy of Lithuania [in the Duma] with the condition of guaranteeing the rights of minorities.⁸⁰

As the report shows, the support of the Lithuanian autonomy was not self-evident and conditional. The representatives of Jews were both unaccustomed to such a demand and concerned about the possible harm to the Jewish interests. The decision of the Great Vilnius Assembly did not mention other ethnic groups in the future Lithuanian autonomous entity and therefore the Jewish representatives had to add the condition about the minorities' rights. As far as it is known, this was the only time when the Jewish electors had to agree with specific Lithuanian political program, besides general "democratic" issues.

The First and Second Dumas were dissolved by the government after short periods of existence, 72 and 103 days, respectively. Therefore, they had not enough time to deal with the Lithuanian and Jewish questions. Due to the new electoral law of 3 June 1907, the Third and the Fourth Dumas had pro-government majority and each worked a full five-year term. In both Dumas, the Jewish deputy from the Kaunas province was Naftali Fridman, a lawyer from Panevėžys. Before 1907, according to a memoir,

He lived with his family in his own large house with a beautiful garden in a new street [in Panevėžys]. He had a very good practice, particularly with the Lithuanian peasants (his specialty was processes about land and inheritance).

The revolution [of 1905] and especially his new assignments as a Duma deputy completely changed his life. He protected now the interests of the Jewish people against the "Black Hundreds" with the same conscientiousness [*gevis-haftikayt*], with which he previously protected the interests of the peasants against landlords.⁸¹

Fridman's connections with the Lithuanians were most probably not the last factor in his nomination as the Jewish candidate by the Jewish electors.⁸² It seems that in October 1907 the Jewish-Lithuanian alliance came into being almost automatically.⁸³ Lithuanians and Jews abstained during the voting for the mandatory deputy from the landowners' curia, and a Polish landlord Kazimir Zawisza was elected by the landowners only. The mandatory peasant deputy and two additional deputies were left-wing Lithuanians: Pranas Keinys and Ignas Požėla joined in the Duma the Tru-

dovik faction and Pranas Kuzma—the Social Democrats.⁸⁴ The Kadet Fridman was far righter than the Lithuanian deputies.⁸⁵

In the elections to the Fourth Duma in the fall of 1912, the place of the Jewish deputy from the Kaunas province was considered secure due to the alliance with “the Lithuanians,” which already became traditional. Therefore Oskar Gruzenberg from St. Petersburg and a Bund candidate from Moscow I.S. Uryson acquired the electoral qualifications in the province. When they were disqualified by the authorities, the only remaining Jewish candidate was Fridman.⁸⁶

Jewish press of different directions stressed the importance of the Jewish-Lithuanian alliance, particularly when the possibility of an electoral agreement between “Jews” and “Poles” in all three “Lithuanian provinces” was seriously discussed in the spring of 1912. *Rassvet* wrote that “in the Kaunas province we traditionally could not ‘betray’ the Lithuanians,”⁸⁷ while the Vilna-based Hebrew *Ha-zman* was much more explicit:

We cannot be traitors, even when we could benefit a lot from such a betrayal. Lithuanians went with Jews in three Dumas, and to each of them one Jew was elected..., at the time that Poles were always against Jews... The Lithuanian deputies as the representatives of a small and oppressed nation better understand the soul of the oppressed, and Jews have no right to betray them, especially when Lithuanians are the majority in the Kaunas province and the Poles are only not-numerous landlords, and we cannot use the law of the third of June [1907] for detriment of the Lithuanian peasants.⁸⁸

Another article in *Ha-zman* repeated this opinion: “we will not be traitors of our brothers in misery—the Lithuanians.”⁸⁹ *Novyi Voskhod*—the weekly of the Jewish People’s Group, which preferred liberal over national politics—stressed the social argument in favor of the alliance: “There is no Polish people, in the genuine meaning of this word, in the Kaunas province; there are only Polish nobles-landlords... The peasants are without exceptions Lithuanians. Jews prefer agreement with Lithuanians.”⁹⁰

Thus, romanticizing the Lithuanian people as oppressed in the national and social senses became the main argument against the agreement with Poles, but the second argument was that the preferring of the old tried allies is the best means to assure the election of a Jewish deputy: “Until now Poles always disappointed the hopes in relation to Jews, and there is no guaranty that their new project of assigning us three mandates would, at all, come to something in reality. And, due to finding a way around between Poles and Lithuanians, due to the equivocal tactics of the Poles... it could easily happen that we would lose that secure place in the Kaunas

province, which we held until now, and we would not have any representative from all three provinces.”⁹¹

Ultimately, the consultation of Jewish non-socialist public activists about the electoral matters held in St. Petersburg in May 1912 decided that the agreements with “Poles” are desirable everywhere except for the province of Kaunas, where “Jews” have to adhere to the alliance with “Lithuanians.”⁹² This decision was accepted by the Jewish electoral committee in Kaunas, in particular after the failure of “Poles” to reach an agreement with “Lithuanians.”⁹³ In order to ensure this alliance through presenting Jewish intentions to the wide Lithuanian public, Oyzer Finkelshtein published an article in the Lithuanian newspaper *Lietuvos Žinios* in September 1912.⁹⁴

Indeed, the Jewish-Lithuanian bloc was formed in 1912, but it almost lost the elections when one of the Lithuanian peasants crossed sides and voted with the Polish landowners. After the election of the first Polish deputy, Felix Raczkowski, this fact was discovered and under pressure from the leaders of the Lithuanian group that person agreed to leave the assembly. After that, all Lithuanian peasants were brought to a church in order to take an oath of loyalty to the bloc. Thus, Fridman and three Lithuanian deputies were elected by the majority of one vote.⁹⁵ *Ha-zman* and the Odessa Hebrew monthly *Ha-shiloah* called Fridman’s re-election “a miracle.”⁹⁶ From the three Lithuanian deputies from the province, Mykolas Januškevičius and Pranas Keinys joined the Trudovik faction in the Duma, while Martynas Yčas and Fridman joined the Kadets.⁹⁷

The Kaunas Jewish-Lithuanian electoral alliance significantly influenced the neighboring province of Suwałki, which was part of the Kingdom of Poland. There, too, the peasant population was largely Lithuanian, and from the second elections on, urban Jews supported Lithuanian candidates. However, there was no hope of electing a Jewish deputy, because the electoral law of 1905 allocated that province only two deputies. Furthermore, the law of 3 June 1907 reduced the number to one.

Jewish support for the Lithuanian candidates in Suwałki against the Polish ones had, undoubtedly, an additional reason. In the Kingdom of Poland, all elections were won by the Polish National Democrats, who increasingly used antisemitic propaganda for the electoral purposes. The Polish Progressive Democratic Party, supported by Jews, could not win elections in any place.⁹⁸ The tension between significant segments of the Polish population and the “Jews” grew from year to year, which caused Jews to lend their support to Lithuanians. In the elections to the First Duma five Jewish and eleven Polish electors walked out together from the

electoral assembly leaving twenty-four Lithuanians alone,⁹⁹ but in the subsequent campaigns Jewish electors openly backed the Lithuanians, without any electoral reward.¹⁰⁰ The “Jews” voted for the Lithuanian candidates even in the towns: in the elections to the Third Duma Kazimieras Grinevičius won in Marijampolė as a “candidate of the Jewish progressive voters”;¹⁰¹ and the Jews of Vilkaviškis voted for Andrius Bulota in 1912.¹⁰²

In the city of Vilnius—which sent a deputy to the First and Second Dumas separately from the Vilnius province—the situation was more complicated. Here the main competing groups were not “Lithuanians” and “Poles,” as in the Kaunas and Suwałki provinces, but “Jews” and “Poles.” The similar number of Polish and Jewish voters (about 8,000 from each group) made the struggle particularly fierce and the grievance particularly heavy. In the elections to the First Duma the list of the Jewish Electoral Committee received the majority and the “Poles” felt offended, and in the elections to the Second Duma a split in the Jewish vote between the lists of the Jewish Committee and of the Bund-lead Social Democrats allowed the “Poles” to get the majority, thus seriously offending the “Jews.”¹⁰³ The “Lithuanians” were only a minor player in this struggle.

In the first Duma elections in the city of Vilnius the Lithuanian Electoral Committee entered into the agreement with the Jewish Committee and supported the Jewish list, which claimed a clear victory.¹⁰⁴ In the Vilnius province, the Jewish Committee reportedly supported the candidacy of an activist of the Lithuanian National Democratic Party, the owner of the newspaper *Vilniaus Žinios* engineer Petras Vileišis, described as “the first Lithuanian industrialist, [who] was especially antagonistic toward the Jews.”¹⁰⁵ In return, the Lithuanian Committee supported Jewish candidates in other towns.¹⁰⁶ However, this alliance was of no benefit, because the 1905 electoral law allocated only seven electors to the urban curia in the Vilnius province, making them unnecessary in the agreements among the Lithuanian, Polish, and Belarusian peasants (40 electors) and the Polish landowners (44 electors). Thus, in the first Duma elections the mandates from the province were equally divided between the peasants and the landowners.¹⁰⁷

The bloc of the Jewish electors and a part of the Lithuanian peasants was repeated in the second Duma elections in the Vilnius province, but the Polish landlords succeeded in tempting to their side four peasants and won all the mandates.¹⁰⁸ In the city of Vilnius, on the contrary, the Jewish-Lithuanian alliance was not reached. The initial contacts were made and the Jewish Committee proposed to the Lithuanian Committee an agree-

ment similar to the agreement with the Russian “Non-party” Progressive Committee,¹⁰⁹ but in the end the Lithuanian Committee acted independently.¹¹⁰ It should be stressed that the adherents of the Lithuanian Committee constituted only a tiny minority of the voters in the city of Vilnius and the independent Lithuanian list received just fifty-one votes in the winter of 1907.¹¹¹ It only proves that the alliance of the Jewish Committee with the Lithuanian one in Vilnius was a matter of principle and not a necessity.

According to the law of 3 June 1907, the city of Vilnius lost its separate representation in the Duma and its urban electors were added to the provincial electoral assembly. However, the law allocated 50 percent of the electors in the province to the landowners’ curia, dominated by Poles, thus allowing them to win by recruiting at least one additional elector. The existence of such an elector was secured by the division of the urban voters in Vilnius into separate curiae according to their religion, thus allowing Christian Poles to elect one Polish urban elector.¹¹² Therefore, the Jewish urban electors could not have any role in the bargains. In the fall of 1907 the Jewish electors walked out from the electoral assembly, as the Polish parties decided not to cede one deputy mandate from the province to Jews.¹¹³ And in 1912, all fifteen Jewish electors did not show up in the assembly for the same reason.¹¹⁴

In general, the relations between the Jewish and Lithuanian voters closely resembled the relations with the Latvian voters in the province of Kurland. There the peasants were Latvians, the landowners were Germans, and the urban curia was dominated by Jews, but with significant German and Latvian element. Therefore, in contrast to the towns in Lithuania, where Jewish candidates had almost automatic majority, in the towns of Kurland the Jewish-Latvian alliance was being formed in the first stage of the elections and the majority of the urban electors were candidates of this alliance. In the elections to the Second Duma, there were only about four Jewish urban electors out of twenty, in the elections to the Third Duma—eleven out of twenty-five, and in the elections to the Fourth Duma—ten out of twenty-five.¹¹⁵ Similar to “Lithuanians,” the Latvian allies were described by a conference of the Jewish voters as “the progressive trend of oppressed nationality” (*progressivnoe napravlenie ugnetennoi natsional’nosti*).¹¹⁶

The Jewish-Latvian alliance in Kurland continued in the provincial electoral assembly, where it voted against the German landlords and could send one Jewish deputy to each Duma. Here, too, the alliance between the “Jews” and the “Latvians,” although based on the ideological platform of

supporting the oppressed, had mainly a practical purpose of electing a Jew. And when the alliance did not promise this outcome, “Jews” had no reason to adhere to it. Thus, in the Third Duma elections the Jewish voters in Kuldīga voted not for the Latvian, but for the German candidate.¹¹⁷ And in the elections to the Fourth Duma in 1912 the Jewish-Latvian alliance was broken. “Latvians” refused to vote for the Jewish candidate and demanded the mandate from the urban curiae for themselves. “Jews” hoped to change the Latvian position and actively supported the Latvian candidate in Riga, but with no result. Finding themselves in an unexpected problematic situation, the Jewish electors decided to vote only for the Jewish candidate. Their vote did not affect the result—a Latvian peasant and a German landlord were elected—but the Jewish deputy was elected with the help of the German votes.¹¹⁸ The Zionist *Rassvet* condemned this tactic of the Jewish electors, stating that “Jews always went there with Latvians. This alliance was kind of natural, because Latvians are representatives of the more democratic currents in the province and they are in antagonism with Germans, the representatives of the large landowning and gross-bourgeoisie. On the other hand, Latvians are the supporters of the freedom of all nationalities.”¹¹⁹

This was basically the same as what was said about the “Lithuanians” in anticipation of the elections of 1912. However, the “natural alliance” was not the only one possible and the allies could easily change sides when their “traditional” cooperation did not satisfy their aspirations any more.

The break between the “Jews” and the “Latvians” in Kurland and the help, which the conservative Germans provided for the election of a Jewish deputy, were symptoms of the general growing detachment of Jewish liberal politics from the all-Russian oppositional forces. In the same time this break might predict the development of the relationship between “Jews” and “Lithuanians” in the electoral politics. Although both groups felt oppressed, in reality they were united only by the common enemies—“Poles” and the undemocratic electoral law. The rapid deterioration of Polish-Jewish relations before 1912 only strengthened this union.¹²⁰ However, there was no strong attachment to the Jewish-Lithuanian electoral alliance from either side and it was dependent on the tactical considerations of the moment.

The Parliamentary Activities

In the discussion of parliamentary activities of the Jewish and Lithuanian deputies it is necessary to divide between the First and the Second Dumas, which were dominated by the oppositional factions and existed only for several months in 1906 and 1907, and the Third and the Fourth Dumas, which were dominated by the pro-governmental parties and existed for a full five-year term.

The first two Dumas had impressive plans but could not accomplish them because of their dissolution by the government. In the First Duma, called “the Duma of people’s anger,” the Jewish and Lithuanian deputies equally participated in the attacks on the government, as members of their factions: the Kadets and Trudoviks.¹²¹ Deputies from these factions made speeches where the questions about pogroms and about general civil equality, including that of Jews, were discussed.¹²²

In the Second Duma, there was no open discussion of the Jewish question.¹²³ The plan of the Kadet leaders was to achieve Jewish emancipation through an amendment to the bill on religious freedom proposed by the government. The bill claimed the abolition of restrictions on adherents of all non-Orthodox religions, but explicitly stated that the anti-Jewish legislation is based on national and not religious grounds, and therefore remains intact. The Kadets hoped to vote down this clause and thus achieve at once the long-desired legal emancipation.¹²⁴ This bill affected also the Lithuanians, and it is known that a commission established by the Kadet faction in order to prepare the matter, under the chairmanship of the former Jewish deputy Maksim Vinaver, discussed the Lithuanian aspects of the bill as well.¹²⁵ And in the Duma’s commission on the religious freedom a Lithuanian deputy Petras Leonas from Suwałki, a member of the Kadet faction, spoke in favor of the emancipation of Jews.¹²⁶

Another question, in which the interests of Jews and Lithuanians coincided, was the bill on general education. In the discussion on 15 May 1907, the Lithuanian deputies Povylius and Bulota spoke about the repressions on education in Lithuanian, denounced the Russification policy, and demanded Lithuanian-language primary schools.¹²⁷ Victor Mandelberg—a Jew and Social Democrat from Irkutsk—accused the government of restricting Jewish enrollment in the Russian schools and prohibition to teach Russian in the traditional Jewish confessional schools, *heders*.¹²⁸ Ironically, it was the only Jewish speech in the Second Duma and all the Jewish press denounced Mandelberg’s “assimilatory” stand.¹²⁹

Dominated by the oppositional majority, the Second Duma was ready to address the nationalities question. The Polish *kolo* with Roman Dmowski at the head introduced to the Duma a bill on Polish autonomy on 10 April 1907.¹³⁰ This bill caused an angry reaction of the Jewish politicians, because it could be interpreted as restricting Jewish rights. For instance, the bill promised the public and administrative use of the Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Russian languages, but did not mention the language of Jews.¹³¹ The Lithuanian politicians were also anxious, because the bill spoke about the autonomy of the Kingdom of Poland, including the Suwałki province with its Lithuanian population. Therefore, a conference of Lithuanian intelligentsia with all Lithuanian deputies was convened in Vilnius during Easter in 1907. The conference decided to work out a bill on the Lithuanian autonomy and to introduce it to the Duma, in order to counteract the inclusion of Suwałki into the Polish autonomy.¹³²

After his return to St. Petersburg, the leading Lithuanian deputy Andrius Bulota gave an interview to the *Svoboda i ravenstvo*—the newspaper of the major Jewish liberal party, the Jewish People's Group. Bulota stressed the difference with the "Poles" and said that although the Lithuanian conference did not discuss the Jewish question, "the national rights of Jews would receive more attention in the expected bill on autonomy of Lithuania than it is in the project of the Polish *kolo*."¹³³ He explained his position as follows:

My confidence is based exclusively on the democratic mood of the Lithuanian people, which was testified, for instance, by two electoral campaigns to the State Duma. I would not conceal from you that among Lithuanians, especially in the dark and little-conscious strata of our peasantry, antisemitism is sprouted with all its ulcers. But this is not the *political* antisemitism which Mr. Purishkevich and Mr. Krushevan profess; it is not similar also to the diplomatic antisemitism of Polish chauvinists. The roots of this hostility to Jews, which is seen among us, should be sought in the religious ground, in the medieval survivals [*perezhitki*]. The Lithuanian people, notwithstanding its revolutionary mood, remains to be deeply a religious people; and a good Catholic, who is in addition an ignorant man, naturally does not like Jews because they "crucified Christ" ... In order to eradicate such ideas, a long-time cultural work needs to be done, but these ideas are not playing any political role now.¹³⁴

Bulota was sure that "the question on the civil equality of Jews in autonomous Lithuania, like the question about insuring their national rights, would hardly meet serious objections in the Lithuanian society." However, he stressed that the matter of the autonomy is still "unclear and undefined," making it impossible to discuss the "future relations with

other peoples, living along with us.” He also asked to receive univocal “Jewish wishes,” again opposing the Polish *kolo*, which was accused of not asking the Jews’ opinion. Nonetheless, the Jewish wishes, according to Bulota, would be accepted only “from the point of view of the Lithuanian interests.”¹³⁵

The correspondent of the *Svoboda i ravenstvo* asked Bulota’s opinion on the question of languages. Bulota was for teaching in the students’ native language, including Yiddish; “the state is obliged to finance Jewish schools like all the others.” As for the higher education, Bulota recognized the rights of Jews to have a “Jewish university,” but he was suspicious about realization of this idea in practice. He was also not sure about the use of languages in the administration and courts:

In principle it is so: all local languages are equal, but how to implement this equality in practice? Can we force all the officials to learn three or four languages: Lithuanian, Yiddish, Belarusian and even Polish? It is good in Switzerland where they have three such languages as French, German and Italian; among them only the last one could be compared with one of our [languages], with Polish ... What [benefits] would give us studying Yiddish, or what [benefits] would Jews receive from studying Lithuanian?¹³⁶

The Jewish People’s Group confessed the set of ideas, coined by Ezra Mendelsohn as “integrationism.” Intergrationists defined Jews not as a nation but as a religious group and they believed in the integration of Jews into the Gentile society. In Russia, the most essential step toward integration was the emancipation and therefore the leaders of the Jewish People’s Group, especially Maksim Vinaver, were actively engaged in the parliamentary politics. This engagement could explain why the interview with the Lithuanian Duma member appeared in the Group’s weekly and not somewhere else.

However, the integrationists in Russia differed significantly from their Western counterparts. Still not recognizing Jewish nationhood, they spoke about religious-historic group, which they called “the Jewish people.”¹³⁷ The program of the Jewish People’s Group even included the demand of “equal national rights” for Jews, but it refrained from defining the exact meaning of the phrase.¹³⁸ Therefore, Bulota’s views, as could be understood from the tone of the interview, were welcomed by *Svoboda i ravenstvo*. Recognizing in principle the Jewish national rights he stressed the problems of their implementation in practice, which fitted the vague national line of the Jewish People’s Group.

The interview with Bulota was reprinted in *Ha-zman*¹³⁹ and in *Severozapadnyi golos*,¹⁴⁰ Vilna-based Russian newspaper aiming at Jewish read-

ers. From May 1907, *Severo-zapadnyi golos* expressed the views of the Jewish People's Group, received subsidies from the Group and was edited by the Group's Vilnius leader and a left-wing Kadet Ilya Romm.¹⁴¹ Conversely, *Rassvet* and the Leftist daily *Der Fraynd* did not mention this interview.

The article in the *Severo-zapadnyi golos*, which accompanied Bulota's interview, compared the position of the Polish *kolo* on the question of territorial autonomy with the opinions of the Ukrainian and Lithuanian deputies and praised the latter. It spoke with special warmth about Lithuanians and implicitly supported their national demands:

[A]s far as the Bulota's opinion expresses the opinion of the Lithuanian deputies, their point of view on the borderland and nationalities questions is the only correct and acceptable one. Moving along the path pointed out by Mr. Bulota, the Lithuanian deputies will, in a sure way, assist the rapprochement [*sblizhenie*] of the nationalities inhabiting the forest country on the Neman, centered around in the city of Vilnius—this cultural-national center of the Lithuanian-Jewish population; and through it they will contribute in the surest way to the liberation and revival of Lithuania. Vilnius has to be the center of a free country, inhabited by free citizens, [possessing] equal and full rights. There should be no "owner" nations and thus there will be no "slave" nations!¹⁴²

Thus, together with the resolution of the Kaunas Jewish electors formulated by the Duma deputy Abramson, this article signaled that the Jewish politicians of the integrationist camp prepared a parliamentary alliance with Lithuanian deputies. They contrasted the Lithuanian deputies—"the representatives of the toiling people"¹⁴³—with Polish National Democrats, supported the idea of the Lithuanian autonomy, but made it clear that this autonomy has to provide sufficient rights to the minorities. The coup d'état that took place on 3 June 1907 prevented the introduction of the bill on the autonomy of Lithuania, thus making the discussion of Lithuanian attitude towards the Jewish minority superfluous.

Jewish integrationists also welcomed Bulota's recipe for eradicating antisemitism, namely "a long-time cultural work," as it perfectly fit into their own plan of struggle against antisemitism. For the Jewish politicians who believed that Jews will continue to reside in the places of their present settlement, antisemitism had to be fought both in order to achieve the legal emancipation and to secure the future Jewish existence and integration. Thus, the regional conference of the Jewish People's Group in May 1907 in Vilnius compiled a list of goals for the struggle with antisemitism and pogroms. Included among these were insurance of cooperation of Belarusian, Lithuanian, and Polish newspapers; publication of brochures

and calendars in Lithuanian and Belarusian; establishment of book stores for dissemination of progressive literature; distribution of literature by “democratic elements of non-Jewish population”; and organization of public lectures.¹⁴⁴ In other words, the local non-Jewish population of the northwestern region had to be targeted by counter-antisemitic agitation as the populations of the other borderlands and in “indigenous” Russia. In order to reach this population the usage of the local languages was planned as obligatory.

The dissolution of the Second Duma and alteration of the electoral law on 3 June 1907 brought an end to the revolutionary period. Among other things, it pushed aside both the Lithuanian autonomy and the wide-scale struggle against antisemitism. The new period in Russian history was characterized by strict government control and its increasingly Russian nationalist and especially anti-Jewish policies.

* * *

The composition of the Third and Fourth Dumas was completely different from that of the first two Dumas. The opposition—Kadets, Trudoviks, and Social Democrats—found themselves in minority, making up about one-third of the members. Another third of the seats went to the right-wing parties, while the faction of the Union of 17th of October stood in the center. In the first years of the Third Duma the Octobrists were close associates of Prime Minister Piotr Stolypin, but even after their alliance was broken, they continued to support the government.

The Lithuanian question was not raised in the Third and Fourth Dumas as such, while Jews were mentioned with high frequency, mostly on the initiative of the right: the rightist orators did not miss an opportunity both to assault Jews in general and to propose anti-Jewish legislative measures. The opposition usually protected Jewish interests and tried to prevent anti-Jewish legislation.

There were only two Jewish deputies in the Third Duma and three in the Fourth Duma. Although they were elected to represent the Jewish population of a certain province, they were perceived as the representatives and protectors of all of Russia’s Jewry. The frequency of anti-Jewish initiatives did not leave them enough time to actively participate in works on other matters. The fierce anti-Jewish attacks of the extreme right made it necessary for the leaders of the oppositional factions to take the floor in order to protect Jews. In the Third Duma, the Lithuanian deputy lawyer Bulota—leader of the Trudoviks—often participated in the deliberations

on questions involving the defense of Jews. According to the statement of the Lithuanian historian Nerijus Ūdrėnas, based on Bulota's own words, he "as a leader of Trudoviks and as an idealist lawyer defended all the weak and disadvantaged; he endeavored to change the system in the whole Empire, not just in Lithuania."¹⁴⁵ Other Lithuanian deputies were peasants, they hardly spoke Russian and were not especially active in the Duma; thus Bulota acted as the leading Lithuanian deputy and spokesman for the Lithuanians of the empire.

Belonging to the oppositional factions made the Jewish and Lithuanian deputies natural allies in the political struggle unfolding in the Duma.¹⁴⁶ For example, all Lithuanian deputies supported the only Jewish initiative in the Third Duma—the bill on abolition of the Pale of Settlement (1910). They signed the bill together with 166 Duma members from the factions of Social Democrats, Trudoviks, Kadets, the Polish *koło*, and Octobrists.¹⁴⁷

There were not many cases deliberated in the Duma, in which the interests of Jews and Lithuanians as national minorities coincided. One such case was the Third Duma's address to Nicholas II. Then the leader of the Polish *koło* Roman Dmowski proposed to include the request "to satisfy the just aspirations of the nationalities" of the empire, he was supported by Bulota, representing Lithuanians, and Lazar Nisselovich, representing Jews.¹⁴⁸

The Third Duma also discussed the bill on the obligatory elementary education, which included inter alia the possibility to teach in languages other than Russian. The Duma's commission in January 1910 agreed to allow non-Russian schools for the Kingdom of Poland and the Baltic area. Bulota's proposal to allow non-Russian schools in the provinces of Vilnius, Kaunas, and Grodno was accepted as well, but the right to teach in Yiddish in Jewish schools was rejected.¹⁴⁹ Bulota promised, in response to a right-wing deputy claiming the absence of Jewish literature, that he would propose an amendment allowing establishment of elementary Yiddish (*zhargon*) schools and at the same occasion would prove the existence of rich literature in that language.¹⁵⁰ Thus, the commission recognized the right to have national schools for Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Germans, and Estonians, while Jews, Georgians, Armenians, Tatars, and other minorities were excluded.¹⁵¹ In later discussions non-Russian schools were allowed for other peoples, including "Jews in the Pale of Settlement."¹⁵² Ultimately, the Duma accepted the bill, but it was rejected by the upper chamber—the State Council.¹⁵³

In the majority of other cases there were the rights of the Jews in Russia that needed to be protected—by the best orators from the oppositional

factions on the Duma's tribune and by all oppositional deputies during the voting process. For example, during the deliberations on the bill on the local courts in December 1909, Bulota opposed prohibiting Jews to become justices of the peace. He eloquently claimed that "the evangelical rule 'there is neither Jew nor Greek' should not be abolished because besides decent people, there unfortunately are also members of the Black Hundreds in the Duma and in the country."¹⁵⁴

On 24 March 1911, Bulota again invoked the Jew and Greek metaphor, when he spoke in sharp terms about the bill on rural self-government (*volost'*) and defined the anti-Jewish restrictions as "cowardice."¹⁵⁵ The bill, imposing all *volost'* taxes on Jews, prohibited them from participation in the elections to the *volost'* boards. The discussion of this clause turned into a bitter debate between the right and the opposition. Besides Bulota, who represented the Trudovik faction, the rights of Jews were defended by the Latvian Social Democrat Andrejs Priedkalns and by the leading Kadets.¹⁵⁶

The law on the obligatory prohibition of trade on Sundays had a special importance for the Jews of the Russian empire. The law was enacted by the Council of Ministers in November 1906 and came to the Duma's discussion only in 1909/1910. Although the government's version of the law allowed exceptions from the obligatory rest on Sundays for the non-Christian populations, this possibility was attacked from two sides. The rightists demanded unequivocal closure of all shops on Sundays, because Russia is a Christian country, whereas the Left factions wanted to ensure a day-long rest for all employees. The matter was of the first-hand importance for Jews and Muslims, because the stoppage of work on Sundays meant for them two non-working days in a week. Thus, the Muslim faction proposed an amendment recognizing Fridays and Muslim holidays as the days of rest for the Muslim population. The Trudoviks proposed continuous rest of forty-two hours once a week, with the possibility for the non-Christians to maneuver, and Bulota attacked the Muslims' amendment because it served only them and not "all nationalities and all religions... It seems to me that the protecting by a certain nationality its own interests, the care about itself only and the neglect of other nationalities are wrong."¹⁵⁷ As it could be expected, the Duma accepted the obligatory Sunday rest and rejected all amendments that could improve the situation for Jews and Muslims. However, because of the social importance of the law, the oppositional factions unanimously voted for it even in such an unambiguous form.¹⁵⁸

The major legislation in the Third Duma, which caused prolonged debates on the Jewish question, was the bill on the municipal self-

government in the towns of the Kingdom of Poland. The discussions on the bill began in the fall of 1910 and continued until June 1913, spilling over to the Fourth Duma.¹⁵⁹ The governmental project proposed the division of the voters into national curiae—Russian, Jewish and general (Polish), and allocated each of them a disproportional number of representatives in the city councils: if Jews constituted more than half of the town inhabitants, they were entitled to 20 percent of the councilors; if less than a half then 10 percent. The curial system and its enthusiastic acceptance by the Polish *kolo* was fiercely criticized by all oppositional factions. Among those who attacked this system was Bulota, who was, as mentioned above, a deputy from the Suwałki province in the Kingdom of Poland. He attacked the position of the *kolo* in favor of the national curiae from the class point of view (the members of the *kolo* belonged to the urban bourgeoisie),¹⁶⁰ as well as from the national point of view: “the division into curiae could seed ethnic discord where it is completely unnecessary and where it is extremely harmful.”¹⁶¹

However, Bulota’s position on the language question in the city administration was called “strange” by the Zionist *Rassvet*:

What is about the language of the internal paperwork, it [the paperwork] has to be proceeded in the language which is closest and most understandable for the local population. Although in many towns Jews comprise the significant majority of the population, it would be difficult to keep the paperwork in Yiddish [*na evreiskom iazyke*], because the rest of the citizens usually do not know it at all. Therefore, it would be natural to keep the paperwork in all provinces of the Kingdom of Poland in Polish. But in those places where the Lithuanian population predominates, i.e., where there are more Lithuanians than Poles, the rights of the Polish language should be transferred to the Lithuanian one, since it is closer for the population and understood by almost everyone.¹⁶²

Thus, in 1911 Bulota maintained his beliefs, which he cautiously expressed in his 1907 interview to *Svoboda i ravenstvo*: the equality of the languages in theory, but rejection of the rights of Yiddish in reality.

Nonetheless, his speech did not cause any reaction by the Jewish press. It was so engaged in expressing its strong feelings against Poles that a tactical “heresy” of an ally, which, in addition, had no practical results, passed unmentioned. It was not the language of the paperwork that was important for Jews, but their place in the Polish cities. *Ha-zman*, while calling for the renewal of the Jewish-Lithuanian electoral alliance in Kaunas in 1912, brought up a point that “the Lithuanians expressed their opinion in the Duma in favor of the change of Jewish rights also in the [municipal] self-government [in Poland].”¹⁶³

Similar to the rest of the opposition, the Trudoviks continued to oppose the bill on the municipal self-government in the Fourth Duma (June 1913). This time again their opinion was expressed by a Lithuanian deputy, Januškevičius, who described Poles as oppressors in relation to Lithuanians and Jews: "It could be thought that Poles—an oppressed people by themselves—would be especially scrupulous and sensitive concerning the rights of another, but the rights of someone else are nothing for them... We, Lithuanians—I say it proudly—never voted for restriction of rights of any other nationality. We know that only by recognizing someone else's rights we have the right that our [rights] would be recognized."¹⁶⁴

However, not always all oppositional factions acted unanimously in the Jewish question and sometimes the Left pursued more radical tactics than the moderate Kadets. For instance, Bulota insisted on the discussion of the bill on the abolition of the Pale in the last session of the Third Duma. But the bill's author Lazar Nisselovich and the Kadet leaders were against such a discussion, fearing the anti-Jewish vote of the Right-Octoberists majority.¹⁶⁵ When in April 1911 the Right faction presented an interpellation about ritual murders allegedly practiced by Jews, the Trudoviks and Social Democrats voted together with both Jewish deputies for the urgent discussion of that interpellation in order to reject it at once; the Kadets, on the contrary, voted against the urgency.¹⁶⁶

Sometimes anti-Jewish sentiments of the Duma majority were evoked in order to prove the absurdity of a discussed measure. In May 1910, Bulota spoke against the governmental bill establishing *zemstvo* in six western provinces. In order to prove to the rightist peasants that the bill does not protect their interests, but gives too much power to the provincial governors and in order to make his arguments bolder, Bulota used a threat of transferring to a Jewish curia and even of circumcision:

There is in this bill a brilliant clause, ... which allows the local governor ... to disenfranchise every person, even the most Russian person, by transferring him from the Russian curia, from the Russian nationality, into the Polish, Latvian or even Jewish one... There would be such a governor, who being displeased by one of the deputies sitting here, would transfer him suddenly from a Russian and Orthodox [group] into, let's say, Jewish nationality. The bill does not specify if all the ceremonies for such a transfer should be performed.¹⁶⁷

Such a passage could be considered antisemitic elsewhere, but in the anti-Jewish atmosphere of the Third Duma it passed completely unnoted.

In the Fourth Duma the role of the Lithuanian spokesman, preformed previously by Bulota, passed to another Lithuanian lawyer, Martynas

Yčas from the Kaunas province. Contrary to the Trudovik Bulota, he belonged to the Kadet faction and acted in full accord with other Kadets and with the Jewish deputies. For example, Yčas supported Fridman in the question on financing the Jewish hospital in Vilnius in early 1914.¹⁶⁸ Most important, both pronounced declarations in the name of their nations when World War I broke out, claiming the readiness to participate in the war effort.¹⁶⁹ Thus, they stressed again that Jews and Lithuanians (like Poles, Latvians, Estonians, and Germans who did the same) do not fully belong to the Russian state and have to declare their loyalty at the time of ordeal.

To conclude the discussion of the activities of Jewish and Lithuanian Duma members, it is important to restate that all of them belonged to the opposition. Therefore, in the majority of cases they were on the same side in the parliamentary battles and supported each other. Besides the presumable attempt of the Jewish integrationist politicians to influence the future bill on Lithuanian autonomy, there were no specific Lithuanian activities in which non-Lithuanian politicians could participate.

On the contrary, the Jewish question became one of the main problems during the last decade of the existence of the Czarist empire, and hardly any oppositional politician could pass over, without expressing his support for the Jewish cause. The emancipation of Jews, as a part of the general equality, remained the most important demand of all “progressive” forces in Russian politics. The leader of the Trudoviks and Lithuanians Bulota, who took the floor to protect all oppressed nationalities and Jews among them, is the best example for this. Thus, the relations between the Jewish and Lithuanian Duma members were friendly, full of sympathy, they expressed support, although conditional, for the national demands of each other in 1907, but one cannot speak about a close alliance between them.

Conclusions

As this article has shown, the place of Lithuanians in the Jewish politics of the late imperial period was marginal and almost unimportant. It is impossible to disagree with the Lithuanian historian Eglė Bendikaitė, who stressed that “Lithuanians and Jews were interested solely in their own ethnic affairs and did not see a need to be one another’s partners in the future to achieve their political ends and implement national ideals.”¹⁷⁰

The primary reason for such alienation was the nonexistence of Jewish acculturation and assimilation into Lithuanian culture. The cultural ties that connected Jewish intelligentsia with the Russian and Polish societies

and made its participation in Russian and Polish politics active and even prominent, was completely absent in the Lithuanian case.

The alliance between Jews and Lithuanians, especially in the Kaunas province, which was so conspicuous in the elections to the State Duma, was the consequence of the placement of both groups in the all-Russian political specter. Because the division between the opposition to the old regime and the pro-governmental forces was so strict, Jews and Lithuanians found themselves on the same side of a “barricade,” notwithstanding the ideological and programmatic differences between various parties. The willingness of all Jewish political parties to find “democratic” allies had the same effect, because the majority of the Lithuanian politicians perfectly fitted this definition.

The presence of Poles—a large and “cultured” nation with well-developed national consciousness and political aspirations—was of the highest importance. Polish nationalism threatened not only the national aspiration of both peoples, but even the civil equality of Jews, as the developments around the bill on the municipal self-government had shown. Thus, the tactical considerations as well as the feelings of oppression drew the Jewish and Lithuanian politicians closer, both in the elections and in the Duma.

The “Polish question” dominated the politics of the northwestern region. According to Ūdrėnas, “[t]he ‘Jewish question’ was ... marginal in Lithuanian politics and clearly subordinate to the Lithuanian-Polish conflict.”¹⁷¹ The same is true for the place of the “Lithuanian question” in Jewish politics. The common enemy—Poles—made ad-hoc alliance easier, but did not push two groups closer to each other.

The question on the autonomy/independence of Lithuania had a serious potential of danger for the Jewish-Lithuanian relations. The preservation of the larger Russian state, although with democratic constitutional order, was desirable for all Jewish political groups and parties. Besides the imperial *Weltanschauung* of significant portion of Russia’s Jews, it had also very practical considerations: only in a large Russian state could six million Jewish citizens have political weight, as well as the backing of the Russian democratic parties against local nationalists. Therefore, all Jewish parties supported the idea of regional self-government; that is partial delegation of authority from the center to the self-ruling units. Moreover, they opposed the organization of the Russian state as a federation of national autonomies, that is, partial delegation of authority from the autonomous units to the central government. However, this objection was downplayed in the Lithuanian case. Because the issue of the Lithuanian autonomy in

the discussed period was not brought close to implementation in practice, it had not caused tensions between Jewish and Lithuanian politicians.

The tactical alliance of “progressive” and “democratic” “Jews” with “progressive” and “democratic” “Lithuanians”—the alliance against Russian *ancien régime* and Polish nationalism—was perfectly effective. Together with the absence of a Jewish-Lithuanian political conflict, like the Jewish-Polish one, it served as a firm basis, from which the Jewish-Lithuanian relations could develop in the next historical period, when Lithuanian independence suddenly became a reality.

NOTES

- 1 On Lithuanian perception of Jews see N. Ūdrėnas, “Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip: The Construction of Lithuanian Identity in Imperial Russia,” Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2000, pp. 351–361.
- 2 A prologue to a newspaper report could serve as a good example for this statement. “In the village of Zudz [Žudžiai], about six *viorst* from our town [Ramygala], a Jewish man ... lives in love and comradeship among his Christian neighbors. The Lord blessed him with children ..., which were born and grew up among the Christian children, ... as the custom among all village inhabitants that their children are not distinguished from the children of their Christian peasant neighbors. And their sons and daughters grow up without the Torah and good manners [*derech erez*], not nursed in faith and do not know to differentiate between religions. And this man had a daughter, 15 years old, ...; she was welcomed among all village’ peasants because of her good talents and because she knew to speak the Lithuanian language as one of them” (*Ha-melitz*, no. 73, 13 [25] April 1889, p. 2). I thank Alex Valdman for bringing this article to my attention.
- 3 According to the 1897 census, there were 592 persons of Jewish religion who claimed the Lithuanian and Žemaitian languages as their mother tongues (0.01% of all Jews in the Russian empire). There were 165 native speakers of Lithuanian and Žemaitian languages in the Kaunas province, 29 in the Vilnius province and 30 in the Suwałki province, i.e., 224 Jews living among Lithuanians claimed Lithuanian as their native tongue (0.05% of the Jewish population in these provinces). Quite unexpectedly, 123 Jews in Poland (outside of the Suwałki province) and 166 Jews in the southwestern region also claimed Lithuanian language as their mother tongue, of them 94 in the province of Bessarabia. It is safe to assume that in these cases their native language was not Lithuanian, but rather Lithuanian dialect of Yiddish. All data is from B.D. Brutskus, *Statistika evreiskogo naseleniia* (St. Petersburg, 1909), pp. 35, 46, table 5.
- 4 J. Mill, *Pionern un boyer: zikhroynes*, vol. 1 (New York: Der veker, 1946), p. 35.
- 5 A. Davidson [A. Idelson], “Obosoblenie i sbližhenie,” *Rassvet*, no. 20, 25 May 1907, p. 13.
- 6 D. Staliūnas, “Anti-Jewish Disturbances in the North-Western Provinces in the Early 1880s,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2004), pp. 119–138; V. Sirutavičius and D. Staliūnas, “Was Lithuania a Pogrom-Free Zone? (1881–1940),” in *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, ed. J. Dekel-Chen,

- D. Gaunt, N. Meir and I. Bartal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 144–158; N. Ūdrėnas, “Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip,” pp. 351–352. On the small pogroms in 1900 see *Tsum ondenk fun Oyzer Finkelshtein* (Kaunas, 1938), pp. 198ff.
- 7 See, for example, a typical newspaper report from Šiauliai in December 1905: “Two weeks ago we were afraid of a pogrom, and the members of the self-defense [unit], about 300 people, get together and organized themselves... Now, the inhabitants [of the town] again began to believe in the possibility of a pogrom, because of the hatred against us [shown] by the policemen and soldiers.” *Ha-tzfirah*, no. 250, 8 (21) December 1905, p. 3.
- 8 Examination of three Jewish dailies (*Der fraynd*, *Ha-tzfirah*, *Ha-zman*) and of two political weeklies (*Voskhod*, *Khronika evreiskoi zhizni*) of late November and December 1905 revealed no mention of the Vilnius Great Assembly. Instead, the Jewish press concentrated on pogroms, the second congress of the Union for the Achievement of the Full Rights, and on the December uprising in Moscow.
- 9 Y. Klausner, “Real’nye zadachi russkogo evreistva,” *Evreiskaia Zhizn’*, February 1906, p. 138.
- 10 *S’ezdy i konferentsii konstitutsionno-demokraticheskoi partii*, vol. 1: 1905–1907 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1997), p. 189; *Volkspartei. “Evreiskaia Narodnaia Partiiia”* (St. Petersburg, 1907), p. 18.
- 11 J. Mill, *Pionern un boyer*, vol. 1, p. 276.
- 12 The latest work on PPS and its relations to the Jewish labor movement is J. D. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality: The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in Late Czarist Russia, 1892-1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).
- 13 On Mill’s role in the establishment of the Bund see J. Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 200–210; J. D. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality*, pp. 83–86.
- 14 M. Mishkinsky, “Regional Factors in the Formation of the Jewish Labor Movement in Czarist Russia,” in *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left*, ed. E. Mendelsohn (New York and London: New York University Press, 1997), p. 84.
- 15 The report on the fourth congress was published in different languages: *Chetviortyi s’ezd vseobshchego evreiskogo rabocheho soiuza v Litve, Pol’she i Rossii* (Geneva, 1901); *Czwarty zjazd ogólnego żydowskiego związku robotniczego na Litwie, w Polsce i Rosyi* (London, 1901); *Der yidisher arbeter* 12 (1901), pp. 97–102. The Russian report was reprinted in *Materialy k istorii evreiskogo rabocheho dvizheniia* (St. Petersburg: Tribuna, 1906), pp. 96–128; *Bund: Dokumenty i materialy, 1894–1921* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2010), pp. 161–183.
- 16 J. Mill, *Pionern un boyer*, vol. 1, p. 277.
- 17 *Materialy k istorii evreiskogo rabocheho dvizheniia*, p. 121.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 121.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 M. Mishkinsky, “Regional Factors in the Formation of the Jewish Labor Movement in Czarist Russia,” p. 85.
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 *Materialy k istorii evreiskogo rabocheho dvizheniia*, p. 120.

- 24 M. Mishkinsky, "Regional Factors in the Formation of the Jewish Labor Movement in Czarist Russia," p. 85.
- 25 M. Mishkinsky, "Regional Factors in the Formation of the Jewish Labor Movement in Czarist Russia," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Studies* 14 (1969), pp. 27–52.
- 26 J. D. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality*, p. 123.
- 27 J. D. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality*, pp. 86–91.
- 28 On Bund's national program see J. Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, pp. 171–257; H. H. Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia: From Its Origins to 1905* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 105–114, 160–176. On LSDP's national program see L. Sabaliūnas, *Lithuanian Social Democracy in Perspective, 1893–1914* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 35–40.
- 29 J. D. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality*, pp. 109, 206–209.
- 30 "Sovremennyi politicheskii moment i nashi natsional'nye trebovaniia," *Poslednie izvestiia*, no. 250, 25(12) September 1905, p. 3. See also J. D. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality*, p. 205.
- 31 The seventh conference of the Bund in the spring of 1906 recognized that the "self-government" could be interpreted as the autonomy of Poland. J. D. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality*, pp. 208–209.
- 32 "Di poylen frage," *Der Bund*, no. 11, 1 December (18 November) 1905, p. 5.
- 33 *Der veker*, no. 1, 25 December 1905 (3 January 1906), p. 4.
- 34 [V. Kossovsky], "Krushenie 'revolutsionnogo romantizma,'" *Poslednie izvestiia*, no. 253, 17 (4) October 1905, p. 6; Reprinted in V. Kossovsky, *Voprosy natsional'nosti* (Vilna, [1907]), p. 98.
- 35 [V. Kossovsky], "Krushenie," p. 7; V. Kossovsky, *Voprosy natsional'nosti*, p. 99.
- 36 [V. Kossovsky], "Krushenie," p. 7; V. Kossovsky, *Voprosy natsional'nosti*, p. 100.
- 37 L. Sabaliūnas, *Lithuanian Social Democracy*, p. 53.
- 38 On the relations of the PPS and the Bund see J. D. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality* and literature cited by him.
- 39 On the early stage of the Bund's relations with the SDKPiL see V. Tsoglin (Dovid Kats, "Taras"), "Mezhdru pervym i tret'im s'ezdami Bunda," in *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie sredi evreev* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vsesoiuznogo obshchestva politkatorzhan i ssyl'no-poselentsev, 1930), p. 181.
- 40 On the conflicts with SDKPiL see V. Levin, "Ha-politika ha-yehudit ba-imperiya harusit be-eydan ha-reaktsiya, 1907–1914," Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2007, p. 116, n. 769.
- 41 There has been no comprehensive research done on the relationship between the Bund and the Latvian Social Democracy (Social Democracy of the Latvian Region, SDLK). There is no record to indicate that there were conflicts between the two parties. On the contrary, they closely cooperated during the revolutionary events of 1905–1907, during the electoral campaigns in Riga and Kurland in 1907 and in the central institutions of the RSDRP after both parties joined it in 1906. In Riga, for example, the city committees of the Bund and SDLK were united in 1907. On cooperation in the elections to the Duma see V. Levin, "Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections," p. 243; Levin, "Ha-politika ha-yehudit," p. 319.
- 42 L. Sabaliūnas, *Lithuanian Social Democracy*, p. 22.
- 43 J. Mill, *Pionern un boyer*, vol. 1, pp. 37–38.

- 44 On the transition from “propaganda,” i.e., serious education of selected workers to “agitation,” i.e., “recruitment of a mass proletarian following” see J. Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, pp. 185–200.
- 45 S. Gozhanskii, “Evreiskoe rabochee dvizheniie nachala 90-kh godov,” in *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie sredi evreev* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vsesoiuznogo obshchestva politkatorzhan i ssyl'no-poselentsev, 1930), p. 84.
- 46 Yu. O. Martov, *Zapiski sotsial-demokrata* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004), pp. 141–42.
- 47 E. Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale: The Formative Years of the Jewish Workers' Movement in Czarist Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 51 n. 3; Central Committee of the LSDP, “Litovskoe rabochee dvizhenie,” *Rabotnik* 5–6 (1899), p. 3.
- 48 L. Sabaliūnas, *Lithuanian Social Democracy*, pp. 25–26.
- 49 A. Kremer, “Osnovanie Bunda,” *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia: istoricheskii zhurnal Istparta* 11 (1922), p. 55. See also H. H. Tobias, *The Jewish Bund*, p. 79.
- 50 V. Tsoglin (Dovid Kats, “Taras”), “Mezhdu pervym i tret'im s'ezdami Bunda,” in *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie sredi evreev*, 162. See also H. H. Tobias, *The Jewish Bund*, p. 91.
- 51 *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie sredi evreev*, p. 77.
- 52 L. Sabaliūnas, *Lithuanian Social Democracy*, pp. 99–101, 103.
- 53 L. Sabaliūnas, *Lithuanian Social Democracy*, p. 103; A. Kirzhnits, *Di yidishe prese in der gevezener rusisher imperie (1823-1916)* (Moscow: Tsentraler felker-farlag fun SSSR, 1930), pp. 30, 32–33.
- 54 For example, see the report on the strike in Kaunas on 12 December 1905, organized by the Bund, SDKPiL, PPS, and LSDP. In the meeting of “the Jewish and Christian workers” that preceded the strike, the speeches were given in Yiddish, Russian, and Lithuanian. *Der Veker*, no. 2, 26 December 1905 (8 January 1906), p. 4.
- 55 R. Abramovich, *In tsvey revoliutsies: di geshikhte fun a dor*, vol. 1 (New York: Arbeter-Ring, 1944), p. 276. Cf. information that LSDP wished to join the electoral bloc of the Bund and RSDRP, *Nasha tribuna*, no. 1, 13 December 1906, p. 18.
- 56 *Piatyi (Londonskii) s'ezd RSDRP, aprel'–mai 1907 goda: Protokoly* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1963), p. 681.
- 57 “Kovna,” *Rassvet*, no. 3, 26 January 1907, p. 25; I. R-n, “Kovno,” *Evreiskii golos*, no. 6, 9 February 1907, pp. 15–16. On the elections in Kaunas see V. Levin, “Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections, 1906–1907,” *Jews and Slavs* 7 (2000), p. 245.
- 58 *Nasha tribuna*, no. 4, 3 January 1907, p. 27; no. 6–7, 25 January 1907, p. 34; no. 8, 31 January 1907, p. 25. See also M. Rafes, *Ocherki po istorii “Bunda”* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1923), p. 198.
- 59 See J. Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, pp. 171–257.
- 60 *Nasha tribuna*, no. 3, 27 December 1906, p. 31.
- 61 *Folkstsaytung*, no. 400, 8 July 1907, p. 4; *Der fraynd*, no. 154, 13 July 1907, p. 3.
- 62 *Folkstsaytung*, no. 397, 4 July 1907, p. 4.
- 63 *Di hofnung*, no. 19, 1 (14) October 1907, p. 2, 4; no. 23, 5 (18) October 1907, p. 1; *Kovenskie gubernskie vedomosti*, no. 76, 10 October 1907, addendum.
- 64 *Bericht über die Tätigkeit des Allgemeinen Jüdischen Arbeiterbundes in Litauen, Polen und Russland (“Bund”) an den Internationalen Sozialistischen Kongress in Kopenhagen* (Geneva, 1910), p. 10.
- 65 *Di hofnung*, no. 22, 4 (17) October 1907, p. 3.

66 *Unzer veg*, no. 6, 10 October 1907, p. 28; *Grodzenskie gubernskie vedomosti*, no. 78, 2 October 1907, addendum.

67 *Informatsionnyi listok Zagranichnoi organizatsii Bunda*, no. 5, October 1912, p. 5.

68 *Rassvet*, no. 40, 5 October 1912, p. 24.

69 Other Jewish socialist parties also did not pay much attention to the LSDP. Thus, for example, the LSDP was not invited to the conference of the socialist parties of different nationalities. This conference was initiated by Haim Zhitlovsky, who was at that time a leader of the Jewish Socialist Workers Party (SERP), and organized by the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries (SR). The leaders of the PPS and a representative of the Belarusian Hromada participated in the conference and a representative of the Latvian Social Democracy came late, but the Lithuanians were not invited and the Lithuanian question was not even mentioned during the deliberations (*Protokoly Konferentsii Rossiiskikh Natsional'no-Sotsialisticheskikh Partii 16-20 apreliia 1907 g.* [St. Petersburg, 1908], pp. 2–4).

The contacts between the Jewish socialist parties and LSDP during the electoral campaigns, if there were such, went almost unnoted. The cases of agreements during the elections in the workers' curia, which involved LSDP and the Zionist Socialist Workers' Party, were discussed above. During the elections to the Second Duma, the leadership of both the Zionist-Socialists and the SERP instructed their organization to make agreements with the Left parties, thus including (but not mentioning) the LSDP too. For the Zionist-Socialist directive "in the first row stands the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party and all its national parts (with exception of the Bund), and other national *Social Democratic* parties" see *Der nayer veg*, no. 24, 4(17) December 1906, p. 80; for the SERP's decision on agreements with "the Left (socialist parties, the Peasants Union, the Trudoviki)" see *Folksshtime*, no. 1, 1 December 1906, p. 124; see also V. Levin, "Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections," p. 244. In the elections to the Third Duma both parties were passive enough and did not develop articulated strategy in relation to socialist parties of other nationalities. The decision of the Central Committee of the Zionist-Socialists did not mention electoral alliances at all (*Unzer veg*, no. 2, 24 August [14 September] 1907, p. 32), while the decision of the Central Committee of the SERP spoke about Jewish and Russian parties only (*Folksshtime*, no. 12, 18 July 1907, p. 48).

70 The terms "Jews," "Lithuanians," "Poles," "Latvians," and so forth were generally used in the contemporary political discourse. However, in reality they denoted not the whole ethnic group, but the "mainstream" political groups in its midst. Only the socialists spoke usually about proletariat and bourgeoisie, adding an ethnic definition when needed. The article uses these terms, not meaning every Jew, Lithuanian, etc., but broadly defining centrist political camps among these populations.

71 For the detailed description of the negotiation see Darius Staliūnas's article "Collaboration of Lithuanians and Jews during the Elections to the First and the Second Dumas" in this volume.

72 N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," p. 362. The demand for two Jewish deputies from a province was not unusual; in the Kiev and Grodno provinces two Jewish deputies were indeed elected; see V. Levin, "Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections," pp. 237–238.

73 N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," pp. 362–363.

74 V. Levin, "Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections," pp. 237–238.

- 75 O. Finkelshtein, "Paraleln," in *Tsum ondenk fun Oyzer Finkelshtein* (Kaunas, 1938), pp. 178–179; idem, "Ba-basanavichius'es keyver," *ibid.*, 164–165; N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," pp. 363–365.
- 76 According to the "General list of the members of the First, Second, Third, Fourth State Dumas," in *Novyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, vol. 14 (St. Petersburg: Brockhaus and Efron, 1913): I–LXXII. See also K. Zalevskii [S. Trusiewicz], "Natsional'nye partii v Rossii," in *Obshchestvennoe dvizheniie v Rossii v nachale XX-go veka*, ed. L. Martov, P. Maslov and A. Potresov, vol. 3, bk. 5 (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia pol'za, 1914), p. 292; T. Emmons, *The Formation of Political Parties and the First National Election in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 339 and 498 n. 180.
- 77 See the Appeal no. 3 of the Jewish People's Group "S kem vstupať v izbiratel'nye soglasheniia?" *Svoboda i ravenstvo*, no. 2, 14 January 1907, p. 15.
- 78 According to the "General list of the members of the First, Second, Third, Fourth State Dumas." See also K. Zalevskii, "Natsional'nye partii v Rossii," p. 289; V. Levin, "Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections," pp. 247–248; N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," pp. 283–388.
- 79 For the detailed description of the negotiation see D. Staliūnas, "Collaboration of Lithuanians and Jews" in this volume.
- 80 Em-es, "Kovno," *Rassvet*, no. 6, 16 February 1907, p. 25. The composition of the conference is unknown, but the majority of the electors belonged to the integrationist wing of the Union for the Achievement of the Full Rights for the Jewish People in Russia (V. Levin, "Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections," p. 263, n. 158; *Kovenskie gubernskie vedomosti*, no. 10, 3 February 1907, addendum).
- 81 Y. A. Heler, "Dos yidishe ponevezh" in *Lite*, vol. 1, ed. M. Sudarski, A. Katsenelenbogen, and I. Kisin (New York, 1951), p. 1412.
- 82 Cf. the description of the agitation for the candidate of the Jewish Committee in the second urban curia in the city of Kaunas, Dr. Fiodor Meerovich, which stressed that he is "acquainted with the landlords and peasants and through him it would be easier to make agreements" at the electoral assembly; *Unzer veg*, no. 7, 19(31) October 1907, p. 35. Oyzer Finkelshtein, who negotiated the first Jewish-Lithuanian agreement in 1906 and continued to maintain contacts with the Lithuanian side, was elected as the elector from the city of Kaunas in the elections to all four Dumas.
- 83 Only one news item was found in the Jewish press, which informed that a conference of the Lithuanian clergy in the province decided not to enter a bloc with the landlords, thus allowing the victory of "Lithuanians and Jews" (*Svoboda i ravenstvo*, no. 40, 16 August 1907, p. 11).
- 84 *Di hofnung*, no. 36, 22 October (4 November) 1907, p. 2; RGIA, f. 1278, op. 3, d. 28, l. 6-7v; Gosudarstvennaia Duma, *Stenograficheskie otchioty*, 3 sozyv, 1 sessia, part 1 (St. Petersburg, 1908), p. 69.
- 85 See N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," pp. 407–411.
- 86 *Rassvet*, no. 36–37, 16 September 1912, p. 28; no. 40, 5 October 1912, p. 24.
- 87 Hazofe, "Evreiskaia pechat' o predstoiashchikh vyborakh," *Rassvet*, no. 17, 27 April 1912, p. 7.
- 88 B. [B. Kats], "Lifnei ha-behirot el dumat ha-mamlakhah ha-revi't (al dvar heskem im polanim)," *Ha-zman*, no. 85, 17 April 1912, p. 2.

- 89 Gr., "Al dvar ha-heskem im ha-polanim (lifnei ha-behirot)," *Ha-zman*, no. 112, 22 May 1912, p. 2.
- 90 *Novyi Voskhod*, no. 35, 29 August 1912, p. 11.
- 91 M. Zalmenson, "Pis'mo iz Vil'ny," *Rassvet*, no. 19–20, 18 May 1912, p. 33.
- 92 *Rassvet*, no. 21, 25 May 1912, p. 32.
- 93 M. Zalmenson, "Posle soveshchaniia izbiratel'nogo komiteta v Kovne," *Rassvet*, no. 22, 1 June 1912, pp. 20–21; *Novyi Voskhod*, no. 35, 29 August 1912, p. 11.
- 94 The Yiddish translation was published in *Tsum ondenk fun Oyzer Finkelshtein*, pp. 169–176.
- 95 *Rassvet*, no. 44, 2 November 1912, p. 13; O. Finkelshtein, "Di historishe hafsoke," in *Tsum ondenk fun Oyzer Finkelshtein*, p. 168; idem, "Paraleln," *ibid.*, pp. 179–180; Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," pp. 464–466.
- 96 "Ha-deputatim ha-yehudiim," *Ha-zman*, no. 237, 27 October 1912, p. 2; Yehudi pashut, "Bi-tefutsot yisrael: XX," *Ha-shiloah* 27 (1912), p. 476.
- 97 According to the "General list of the members of the First, Second, Third, Fourth State Dumas." See also N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," p. 464.
- 98 On elections in Congress Poland see S. Ury, "Red Banner, Blue Star: Radical Politics, Democratic Institutions and Collective Identity Among Jews in Warsaw, 1904–1907," Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2006, pp. 180–226; S. D. Corrsin, *Warsaw before the First World War: Poles and Jews in the Third City of the Russian Empire, 1880–1914* (New York, 1989), pp. 87–104; idem, "The Jews, the Left, and the State Duma Elections in Warsaw in 1912: Selected Sources," *Polin* 9 (1996), pp. 45–54; idem, "Polish-Jewish Relations before the First World War: The Case of the State Duma Elections in Warsaw," *Gal-Ed* 11 (1989), pp. 45–53; I. Oppenheim, "Hahrafat ha-kav ha-anti-yehudi shel ha-endečiya be-folin ba-shanim 1908–1914," *Shvut* 11 (27) (2002–2003), pp. 118–128.
- 99 N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," pp. 371–373; R.A. Tsiunchuk, *Dum-skaia model' parlamentarizma v Rossiiskoi imperii: etnokontsional'noe i regional'noe izmereniia* (Kazan: FEN, 2004), p. 222; D. Staliūnas, "Collaboration of Lithuanians and Jews" in this volume.
- 100 N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," pp. 389–390, 411; D. Staliūnas, "Collaboration of Lithuanians and Jews" in this volume.
- 101 *Di hofnung*, no. 24, 7 (20) October 1907, p. 2.
- 102 *Rassvet*, no. 43, 26 October 1912, p. 36.
- 103 *Nasha tribuna*, no. 8, 31 January 1907, pp. 24–26.
- 104 On Lithuanian support of the Jewish list see D. Staliūnas, "Collaboration of Lithuanians and Jews" in this volume.
- 105 N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," p. 354; see also p. 382 and D. Staliūnas's article "Collaboration of Lithuanians and Jews" in this volume.
- 106 *Di tsayt* (Vilna), no. 50, 6 (19) April 1906, p. 3; N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," p. 370. In the end, Osip Tarashkevich was elected as the elector from the Vilnius uезд (*Vilenskie gubernskie vedomosti*, no. 28, 12 April 1906, addendum).
- 107 T. Emmons, *The Formation of Political Parties*, pp. 339–340. See also D. Staliūnas, "Collaboration of Lithuanians and Jews" in this volume.
- 108 *Nasha tribuna*, no. 10, 15 February 1907, pp. 24–25; N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," pp. 390–393; D. Staliūnas, "Collaboration of Lithuanians and Jews" in this volume.

- 109 *Rassvet*, no. 3, 26 January 1907, p. 24.
- 110 See D. Staliūnas, "Collaboration of Lithuanians and Jews" in this volume.
- 111 *Severo-zapadnyi golos*, no. 347, 30 January 1907, p. 3; no. 348, 31 January, p. 3; no. 349, 1 February 1907, p. 3.
- 112 On the electoral law of 3 June 1907 see M. Szeftel, "The Reform of the Electoral Law to the State Duma on June 3, 1907: A New Basis for the Formation of the Russian Parliament," in *Liber Memorialis George De Lagarde* (= *Études présentées à la Commission Internationale pour l'histoire des assemblées d'états*, London, 1968, vol. 38) (Louvain & Paris, 1970), pp. 319–367.
- 113 *Di hofnung*, no. 35, 21 October (3 November) 1907, p. 3. See also Gosudarstvennaia Duma, *Stenograficheskie otchioty*, 3 sozyv, 1 sessia, part 1 (St. Petersburg, 1908), pp. 576–578; N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," pp. 412–414.
- 114 *Rassvet*, no. 43, 26 October 1912, pp. 34–35.
- 115 *Kurlandskie gubernskie vedomosti*, no. 9, 3 February 1907, addendum; V. Levin, "Ha-politika ha-yehudit," pp. 401, 416.
- 116 *Rassvet*, no. 1, 10 January 1907, p. 31.
- 117 *Di hofnung*, no. 24, 7 (20) October 1907, p. 2.
- 118 *Novyi Voskhod*, no. 44, 1 November 1912, pp. 15–16; *Rassvet*, no. 44, 2 November 1912, pp. 13–14, 19.
- 119 A. Davidson [A. Idelson], "K rezul'tatam vyborov," *Rassvet*, no. 43, 26 October 1912, p. 5.
- 120 On the Polish-Jewish relations before 1912 see: D. Engel, "Ha-she'elah ha-polanit ve-ha-tnu'ah ha-tsonit: ha-vikuah al ha-shilton ha-atsmi be-arei polin ha-kongresait, 1910–1911," *Gal-Ed* 13 (1993), pp. 59–72.
- 121 For a survey of the activities of the Lithuanian deputies and the Jewish deputies from the Lithuanian provinces in the First Duma see A. Gaigalaitė, *Lietuvos atstovai Rusijos Valstybės Dūmoje 1906-1917 metais* (Vilnius: Vilniaus pedagoginio universiteto leidykla, 2006), pp. 29–54.
- 122 On the Jewish question in the First Duma see S. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1920), pp. 135–139; S. Harcave, "The Jewish Question in the First Duma," *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (1944), pp. 155–176; B. Kats, "Ha-parlament ha-rishon be-rusiya—ha-duma ha-mamlachtit," *He-avar* 5 (1957), pp. 3–10; Y. Maor, "Yehudei rusiya be-yemei ha-dumot," *He-avar* 7 (1960), pp. 49–51; R. Ganelin, "Pervaia Gosudarstvennaia Duma v bor'be s chernosotenstvom i pogromami," in *Osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie v Rossii* (Saratov: Izdatel'stvo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1992), pp. 113–140; Ch. Gassenschmidt, *Jewish Liberal Politics*, pp. 37–45; V. Levin, "Yehudei rusiya ve-shalosh ha-dumot ha-rishonot: ha-behirot ve-ha-sheela ha-yehudit ba-dumot (1906–1912)," M.A. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997, pp. 21–28; S.M. Galai, "Evreiskie pogromy i rospusk I Gosudarstvennoi Dumy v 1906 godu," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 9 (2004), pp. 23–42.
- 123 On the Jewish question in the Second Duma see Y. Maor, "Yehudei rusiya be-yemei ha-dumot," pp. 60–61; V. Levin, "Yehudei rusiya ve-shalosh ha-dumot ha-rishonot," pp. 44–47.
- 124 M. Berdichevskii and S. Levin, "Duma Gosudarstvennaia," *Evreiskaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 7 (St. Petersburg, [1907]), p. 373; M. Vinaver, *Kadety i evreiskii vopros* (Odessa, 1912), pp. 7–9; G. Sliozberg, *Dela minuvshikh dnei* (Paris, 1933), vol. 3, p. 237; Y.

- Maor, *She'elat ha-yehudim ba-tnu'ah ha-liberalit ve-ha-mahapkhaniit be-rusiyah* (1890–1914) (Jerusalem, 1964), p. 85; idem, “Yehudei rusiya be-yemei ha-dumot,” p. 60.
- 125 *Rassvet*, no. 11, 22 March 1907, p. 21.
- 126 *Rassvet*, no. 18, 12 May 1907, p. 25. Two Lithuanian deputies participated in the commission, Leonas and Antanas Povylius from Kaunas, and two Jewish deputies, Abramson and Yakov Shapiro from Kurland (Gosudarstvennaia Duma, *Stenograficheskie otchioty*, 2 sozyv [St. Petersburg, 1907], vol. 1, p. 1275).
- 127 Gosudarstvennaia Duma, *Stenograficheskie otchioty*, 2 sozyv, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1907), pp. 554–560.
- 128 Gosudarstvennaia Duma, *Stenograficheskie otchioty*, 2 sozyv, vol. 2, pp. 560–563.
- 129 See the overview of the Jewish press in *Rassvet*, no. 21, 1 June 1907, pp. 16–17.
- 130 On the bill see, for example, E. Chmielewski, *The Polish Question in the Russian State Duma* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1970), pp. 38–43.
- 131 See A. Z-an, “Avtonomiia Pol'shi i evrei,” *Rassvet*, no. 16–17, 4 May 1907, pp. 5–8; a report on a meeting in the National Jewish Club in Warsaw (a Zionist organization), *ibid.*, no. 18, 10 May 1907, pp. 28–29; *Ha-zman*, no. 82, 14 (27) April 1907, p. 1; Appeal of the Zionist organization in Poland, *ibid.*, no. 119, 1 (14) June 1907, p. 3.
- 132 N. Ūdrėnas, “Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip,” pp. 395, 398–399.
- 133 Cit. from *Severo-zapadnyi golos*, no. 443, 24 May 1907, p. 2.
- 134 *Ibid.*
- 135 *Ibid.*
- 136 *Ibid.*
- 137 E. Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 16; for the discussion of the Russian variant of integrationalism see *ibid.*, p. 60.
- 138 On Jewish People's Group see A. Orbach, “The Jewish People's Group and the Jewish Politics, 1906–1914,” *Modern Judaism* 10 (1990), pp. 1–15; Ch. Gassenschmidt, *Jewish Liberal Politics in Czarist Russia, 1900–1914: The Modernization of Russian Jewry* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), pp. 157–159; V. Levin, “Ha-politika ha-yehudit,” pp. 132–147. For the discussion of its program see *ibid.*, 136–138.
- 139 “Ha-avtonomiyah ha-lita'it u-she'elat ha-yehudim,” *Ha-zman*, no. 115, 28 May (10 June) 1907, pp. 1–2.
- 140 “Litovskie deputaty i natsional'nyi vopros,” *Severo-zapadnyi golos*, no. 443, 24 May 1907, p. 2.
- 141 In the letter from 11 May 1907 Romm thanked Mikhail Sheftel—one of the heads of the Jewish People's Group—for sending 600 rubles for the newspaper and asked to send next 600 rubles by 1 July. Tsentralnyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Sankt – Peterburga (Central State Historical Archives of St. Petersburg) (TsGIA SPb), f. 2049, op. 1, d. 2563, l. 1–1v. In the same year the Jewish People's Group appointed Solomon Pozner to edit *Severo-zapadnyi golos* (V. Kel'ner, “Izdatel'skaia deiatel'nost' S.V. Poznera i nekotorye voprosy obshchestvennoi zhizni v Rossii v nachale XX v.” in Idem, *Ocherki po istorii russko-evreiskogo knizhnogo dela vo vtoroi polovine XIX–nachale XX v.* (St. Petersburg: Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka, 2003), p. 97.
- 142 P. Samarin, “Okraïnnyi i natsional'nyi vopros,” *Severo-zapadnyi golos*, no. 443, 24 May 1907, p. 2.

- 143 Ibid.
- 144 GARF, f. 4, op. 1907, file 142, l. 2 (microfilm in CAHJP, HMF 80).
- 145 N. Ūdrėnas, "Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip," p. 416. On Bulota's speeches in the Duma see L. Häfner, "Die 'Illusion' des freien Wortes: Sprechen und Handeln der parlamentarischen Linken in der russischen Staatsduma, 1906–1914," in *Von Duma zu Duma. Hundert Jahre russischer Parlamentarismus*, ed. D. Dahlmann and P. Trees (Bonn: Bonn University Press and V&R unipress, 2009), pp. 99–101.
- 146 All Jewish deputies belonged to the Kadet faction. Out of five Lithuanian deputies in the Third Duma, one was a member of the Social Democratic faction, three of the Trudovik faction and one of the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian *kolo*—the faction of Poles from the western provinces. In the Fourth Duma, there were two Trudoviks, one member of the Kadet faction, one of the Progressive faction, and one of the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian *kolo*.
- 147 *Evreiskaia nedelia*, no. 8, 3 June 1910, p. 14. On the history of this bill see Levin, "Ha-politika ha-yehudit," pp. 348–357.
- 148 Gosudarstvennaia Duma, *Stenograficheskie otchioty*, 3 sozyv, 1 sessia, part 1 (St. Petersburg, 1908), pp. 162–163, 166, 207–208.
- 149 *Rassvet*, no. 5, 31 January 1910, p. 15.
- 150 *Novyi Voskhod*, no. 5, 4 February 1910, p. 15.
- 151 *Novyi Voskhod*, no. 6, 11 February 1910, pp. 12–14; *Rassvet*, no. 7, 14 February 1910, p. 11.
- 152 *Novyi Voskhod*, no. 10, 11 March 1910, pp. 12–13; *Rassvet*, no. 11, 14 March 1910, pp. 28–29.
- 153 V. Levin, "Ha-politika ha-yehudit," p. 343.
- 154 Gosudarstvennaia Duma, *Stenograficheskie otchioty*, 3 sozyv, 3 sessia, part 1 (St. Petersburg, 1909), p. 2938; *Rassvet*, no. 50, 15 December 1909, p. 11.
- 155 *Evreiskii mir*, no. 13, 31 March 1911, p. 21; *Rassvet*, no. 14–15, 3 April 1911, p. 38.
- 156 *Rassvet*, no. 13, 27 March 1911, pp. 19–20; no. 14–15, 3 April 1911, pp. 38–41; *Evreiskii mir*, no. 13, 31 March 1911, pp. 16–26.
- 157 Gosudarstvennaia Duma, *Stenograficheskie otchioty*, 3 sozyv, 3 sessia, part 4 (St. Petersburg, 1910), p. 387; *Rassvet*, no. 19, 9 May 1910, p. 27.
- 158 V. Levin, "Ha-politika ha-yehudit," pp. 344–345.
- 159 See T. R. Weeks, "Nationality and Municipality: Reforming City Government in the Kingdom of Poland, 1904–1915," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 21 (1994), pp. 23–47; idem, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863–1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), pp. 152–171; E. Chmielewski, *The Polish Question*, pp. 138–160; A. Avrekh, *Tsarizm i tret'eiun'skaia sistema* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), pp. 97–101.
- 160 *Rassvet*, no. 48, 25 November 1911, p. 20.
- 161 *Rassvet*, no. 49, 2 December 1911, p. 30.
- 162 Ibid., p. 28.
- 163 B. [B. Kats], "Lifnei ha-behirot el dumat ha-mamlakhah ha-reviit (al dvar heskem im polanim)," *Ha-zman*, no. 85, 17 April 1912, p. 2.
- 164 *Rassvet*, no. 25, 21 June 1913, p. 28.
- 165 *Rassvet*, no. 45, 4 November 1911, p. 22.
- 166 *Rassvet*, no. 18, 1 May 1911, pp. 17–18; no. 19, 8 May 1911, p. 14. See also V. Levin, "Ha-politika ha-yehudit," p. 341.

167 Gosudarstvennaia Duma, *Stenograficheskie otchioty*, 3 sozyv, 3 sessia, part 4 (St. Petersburg, 1910), p. 852.

168 A. Gaigalaitė, *Lietuvos atstovai*, p. 260.

169 Ibid., 273.

170 E. Bendikaitė, “Expressions of Litvak Pro-Lithuanian Political Orientation, c. 1906–c. 1921,” in *The Vanished World of Lithuanian Jews*, eds. A. Nikžentaitis, S. Schreiner and D. Staliūnas (Amsterdam and New York, 2004), 91.

171 N. Ūdrėnas, “Book, Bread, Cross, and Whip,” p. 357.

LITHUANIA? BUT WHICH?

The Changing Political Attitude of the Jewish Political Elite in East Central Europe toward Emerging Lithuania, 1915–1919

MARCOS SILBER

A Jewish folktale tells of a meeting between Dr. Shimshon Rosenboim (1859–1934), head of the delegation of the newly born Lithuanian Republic to negotiations with the Soviets, and Adolph Joffe (1883–1927), head of the Soviet delegation:

As the two delegates took their seats, the two Jews [Rosenboim and Joffe] faced one another. The first point of the agenda was determining the border between the two countries.

“Dr. Rosenboim,” said Commissar Joffe, “how far do you propose the borders of your great Lithuania should extend?” His voice dripped with sarcasm, for after all, the representative of the great Union of Socialist Republics was addressing representatives of a tiny fledgling state.

“As far as the Jews pray *nusach Lite*,” replied Dr. Rosenboim, tongue in cheek...

[The two] Jews burst into laughter. Joffe turned to the Russian [members of the delegation] saying, “Comrades, if this is to be the basis of our negotiations, Lithuania could incorporate not only Minsk but even Moscow!”¹

This tale, which joins fiction to history, presents the diverse geographical perceptions of the scope of Lithuanian territory. It highlights the difference between formal states and ethno-cultural minorities, attesting to a time when new political norms had not yet been formalized. By relating the outburst of laughter it signifies mainly the Jewish interpretation of the Lithuanian borders relating to the internal Jewish cultural divisions ostensibly irrelevant to the international relations. The story reveals the contested meaning of “Lithuania” from various angles, the tensions over the geopolitical extent of the Lithuanian state, but also the need to accommodate the interpretations to a certain political reality—namely Lithuania’s borders in the earliest formative period. There seem to be three orders: Soviet, Lithuanian and Jewish. From the point of view of the international system the first two seem acknowledged and legitimized, but their dele-

gates surprisingly are not “authentic Russians” or “authentic Lithuanians.” Rather, they are Jews. However, it turns out, that the Jews have their own autonomous geography independent of the formal political system. This chapter presents the changing meaning of such questions among the Jewish elite, which saw itself included in one or another type of “Lithuanian” project (whatever this concept meant) according to the fluctuating circumstances in such a turbulent time. What should the geographical borders of the new Lithuanian state be? What kind of relations should it have with neighboring states, as well as within, among its various populations and societies? How should they be governed? In short, what kind of country are we talking about when we speak of Lithuania, in terms of its ethnic Jewish component?

This chapter examines these questions from the sociohistorical standpoint, especially in regards to the Vilnius Jewry in a period of liminality. This pertains to the interval between two stages and two distinct situations: the Russian imperial order and the Lithuanian national state, and takes place from 1915 to 1919, when the territory was disputed among different states and nations and its fate was far from clear.

On the Eve of the German Occupation

Regarding folktale, Jews had their own centuries-old history of Lithuania as a sociohistorical concept. Its literature is vast, embracing mainly the territory inhabited by the *Litvaks*, Lithuanian Jews, which roughly overlapped the historical Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and was much larger than Ethnic Lithuania, where the *Litviner* (Yiddish for gentile ethnic Lithuanians) lived compactly. The scope of Lite, “Jewish” Lithuania, is similar to the areas under the authority of the Lithuanian Jewish Council (*Waad medinat Lita*) from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries until the eighteenth century. This includes large parts of the northwestern region of imperial Russia (the Vilnius and Kaunas Russian *Gubernia* [governorate], the Grodno, Minsk, Vitebsk region), as well as parts of Kurland, northeastern parts of Prussia, and part of northeastern Congress Poland (Suwałki region).

Like the vast majority of Jews in Congress Poland and the Pale of settlement in imperial Russia, the *Litvaks* (Jews born in Lite and their descendants) at the end of the nineteenth century were in great measure an urban population. According to the official statistics of the 1897 census, 615,691 out of 1,414,157 Jews in the northwestern provinces resided in

the cities (43% in a region with average urbanization of 11–12%). The average percentage of Jews in the towns of the northwest was 52 percent.² So in most cities Jews were the majority of the population—a very significant factor in our understanding of their economic activities and politicization. It was a population deeply rooted in Yiddish language and culture. According to the same census, 99.3 percent of the Jews in the region declared Yiddish as their mother tongue. The region was the heartland of modern Jewish politics during the late nineteenth century. In *fin de siècle* Russia the *Litvaks* were a vibrant social element in the shaping of Jewish ethnopolitics, who also considered the fate of the region and the country's configuration. The major Jewish parties and ideological groups addressed the question of the desired future status of the Lithuanian territory (as Lite), although not as often as the Polish question or other national or territorial questions. Sometimes it was clearly delineated, while other times only vaguely envisaged.

The opening anecdote shows up the moment of negotiations, and even shows that the Jews' viewpoint regarding Lithuania's desired scope was not homogeneous. Different Jewish parties addressed the future of the region differently, trying to present their specific "Jewish" point of view. The main parties' theoretical positions are examined in this chapter, taking into account that the purpose of this chapter is to scrutinize the connection between the ideological and practical levels, when the practical implications of the theoretical positions were clear and the debate about Lite/Lithuania's future was deemed relevant. Also discussed in this chapter is the fate of "Lithuania" (whatever that might mean) from four different angles representing four streams in Jewish politics: Dubnowian Folkism, Bundism, Russian Zionism (some of whose adherents later became the "Lithuanian Zionists"), and German Zionism (according to the plans this movement presented to the German Foreign Ministry in the early days of World War I).

Simon Dubnow (1860–1941) was the *spiritus movens* of Jewish diaspora nationalism. His main ideas on the subject were published in his famous *Letters on Ancient and Modern Judaism*, the canon of the Folkist party in particular (designed according Dubnowian ideas). His foremost concept was the endurance of great multinational states in general and the Russian empire in particular. He rejected the idea of dismantling the imperial order into independent nation-states, which has implied his negative idea about a possible Lithuanian state. Rather, he envisaged the metamorphosis of the Russian empire into one state composed of nations or nationalities—an alternative to the classic objective of nation-states. Dub-

now did not believe that territory was an essential condition for national existence. Moreover, he saw a process of deterritorialization of nations, with the implication of no linkage between territory and nation. Accordingly, no grounds existed to justify the division of nations into autochthonous and foreign.

But his concept did not negate collective rights for the different nations. According to Dubnow, depriving nationalities of their rights would breed constant unrest and numerous insurrections and disorder, which would threaten the state's existence. Formal equality of the nations constituting this state, he claimed, would ensure the coexistence of them all, and equal opportunities for the development of each.³ The division of the Russian empire into national territorial units was against the state's interest, understood by Dubnow as the need to keep it whole. The breakdown of the great Russian empire's economy into smaller economic units would lead to poverty and endless economic crises. Such a program was also unfeasible on demographic grounds, since the various ethnic groups overlapped. The Russian northwest offered an excellent example. There, nations and ethnic groups lived intermingled in a single territorial unit. Any attempt by the nationalities to break the empires up into smaller territorial units (e.g. a small Lithuania separated from Poland, Ukraine, or even Belarus), would simply result in bloodshed and economic stagnation. Only national autonomy based on the personal principle could preserve the advantages of a great state yet satisfy its nations' wishes, without the disadvantages attendant on its division into smaller units.⁴

With regard to the Jews, this idea enabled a synthesis of Jewish nationalism and loyalty to the state.⁵ The political purpose of autonomism, as Dubnowian ideology was often called by the Jews, represented mainly in the Folkist party, was to abolish the hegemony of any one national group over another. Such an idea aimed to attain equality, formally as well as factually, for the various nationalities (including the Jews) that lived in the state.⁶

In the early 1900s the autonomist idea penetrated the political thought of east European Jewry almost entirely. The first Jewish party in Russia to adopt it was the Bund, tentatively at its fourth conference in 1901 and unreservedly after 1905.⁷ In addition to the fourth conference's crucial resolution on the national question, which led to the adoption of their program on cultural autonomy, the Bund decided to add the word "Lithuania" to the party's name (*Algemeyner yiddisher arbiter Bund in Lite, Poyln un Russland*). The addition was significant in that it reflected the leadership's conception that Lithuania was different from Russia, having its own na-

tional character. Moreover, as the historiography of the Bund stressed, it reflected “a factual shrinkage” of Russia to the southern Pale of Jewish settlement (the Ukraine).⁸

With regard to its recognition of regional differences in western Russia notwithstanding, and despite its conflicts with the Russian Social Democracy, the Bund never renounced its all-Russian orientation. Despite bitter attacks by the Polish Socialist Party (PPS; *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*) or the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP; *Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija*), the Bundist leadership in Vilnius, as elsewhere, clung onto the view that Russia’s breakup into national states would generally undermine the unity of the Jewish people and particularly cause the consequent fracture of the Jewish working class. In Lite the Bund found itself between the devil and the deep blue sea, that is, between the PPS and the LSDP. The former exerted pressure on the Bund to support the independence of Poland, broadly defined geographically. The LSDP, by contrast, expected Bund members in Vilnius, Kaunas, Grodno, and Białystok to support its formulation of Lithuanian national aspirations. It endorsed partial dissociation from Russia and the constitution of a democratic Lithuania, federated with other states (including Russia), where the Jewish population would enjoy some cultural autonomy. Certainly, some Bundists regretted their party’s indifference to the Lithuanian national claims as expressed by the LSDP.⁹ However, they did not alter the fundamental position of the Bundist leadership. Despite the gap between the two parties on the region’s desirable future, they cooperated in organizing strikes, antigovernment demonstrations, and the like. They also kept channels of communication open to review practical steps.¹⁰

Between 1901 and 1906 most Jewish national parties adopted the autonomist posture for a variety of reasons.¹¹ The Bund accepted the idea of cultural autonomy for essentialist-historicist reasons. The *Vozrozhdenie* group did so for instrumentalist-political reasons as personal autonomy would provide the Jewish nation with effective (state) instruments to direct the massive Jewish migration to a specific territory, thereby achieving the territorialization of the Jews.¹²

After Dubnow and the Dubnowist followers (crystallized in the Folkstein party) and the Bund, Zionism was the third element in this discussion. Zionism was more receptive to territorial claims than the Bund and Dubnow were. Since the Zionist movement had territorial demands over Palestine, it accepted territorial demands of other nations in imperial Russia. Regarding the Czarist empire, the Helsingfors conference of Russian Zionism in 1906 decided actively to support different national movements’ efforts to democ-

ratize it. Russian Zionists supported federalization of the empire along ethnonational lines. The idea of ethnic units did not mean separatism. The larger context into which national units were to fit was the idea of a democratic federal Russia. They did not name the territories explicitly. However, if the contours demarcated in the new Zionist program reflected some very roughly ethnogeopolitical main lines, the inference would be clear. It mentioned five regions: Poland (including Suwałki province), Russia, the South (Ukraine), the Baltic region (Kurland), and Lithuania (the northwestern province). According to the Helsingfors program the territorial nations should exercise territorial autonomy; however, the minorities should receive broad personal-national autonomy. According to the Zionist reordering, political power would be divided among the ethnic groups, irrespective of where their members lived. This new extraterritorial administrative apparatus would complement the conventional territorial foci of power. Therefore, the state would be organized along two axes: territorial and national. Essentially territorial issues would be separated from national issues (education, culture, or any other matter of cardinal importance to the specific nation), thereby preventing oppression of minority groups by the hegemonic or majority group. Autonomy within the framework of a federal democratic Russia was the ultimate national Zionist goal in Russia.

The Helsingfors conference caused a sea change in the Zionist program. It acknowledged the Zionists' duty to play a significant role in the political struggle for the civil and national rights of the Jews in imperial Russia. In the Helsingfors program, Zionism combined its work for the territorialization of the Jews in Palestine and for its autonomistic efforts in imperial Russia, giving both equal precedence. In reverberation of the *Vozrozhdenie* group, it was first stated that the struggle for national autonomy in the diaspora would crystallize the Jewish nation. Second, national-personal autonomy would provide the necessary apparatus to mold Jewish existence according to the Zionist vision in all fields of the Jewish existence, from education to emigration and colonization. The apparatus would be a national communal body that would reshape the traditional *Kehilleh* (community) into a Jewish democratic all-empire or territorial assembly.¹³

Finally, we refer to the German Zionists. Their point of view became relevant because of the involvement of the movement in Germany's war efforts.¹⁴ At the beginning of World War I leading Zionists in Germany, such as Max Bodenheimer (1865–1940), Franz Oppenheimer (1864–1943), and Adolf Friedemann (1871–1933), established the German Committee for the Liberation of Russian Jewry (*Deutsches Komitee für die Befreiung der russischen Juden*), which in 1914 November became the

Committee for the East (Komitee für den Osten—henceforth KfdO). This committee was composed of leading figures from Jewish organizations in Germany. Because it included personalities across the entire political, social, and ideological spectrum of the German Jewry, it acquired prominence among the committees acting on behalf of eastern European Jews. Its aim was to provide political assistance to the Jews of the Russian empire in German-occupied areas, and also to obtain the Jews' support for and loyalty to Germany and its allies. The committee's basic assumption was that these Jews had a common interest with Germany: to shift the western border of Russia eastward in order to distance Russia and weaken its influence on Central Europe.

The political plan that the committee drew up for a new European order after the war included a proposal to expropriate the western regions of the Russian empire (its northwestern and southwestern provinces and Congress Poland), to establish a huge buffer state between Russia and Germany. Accordingly, the KfdO did not countenance any independent or even autonomous Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, etc. The committee assumed that this huge state would be multinational in practice, and no ethnonational group would be a majority. A delicate demographic balance would therefore exist among the different nationalities. According to the committee, this balance would stop all possible rebellious Polish national pretensions for German Poznań, because the non-Polish minorities would object vehemently to the inclusion of the district in the proposed political entity. Equally, a pro-German and anti-Russian orientation would be sustained. The committee members thought that such a state would be a convenient ally of Germany and would regard Russia as its main enemy.

According to the Committee's plan, the future state would acknowledge its multinational nature and grant the various minorities—including the Jews—the right to live in accordance with the principles of personal national autonomy. From a formal legal standpoint, this national autonomy would not be based on territory but on each individual's national affiliation, irrespective of place of residence.¹⁵ Thus all ethnonational groups in the country (Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews, Lithuanians, Germans) would be able to take part equally in building it. The KfdO's approach to an independent Lithuania, therefore, was negative.

These are mainly ideological evaluations in a theoretical situation. However, the question of the future of Lite/Lithuania became relevant under the German occupation when the region's future was discussed. It was then, that the ideological and theoretical approaches had to be considered in view of the changing reality.

**“The Flourishing of Our Fatherland Will Be Federative”:
From the Beginning of the German Occupation to the Establishment
of the Taryba (the Vilnius Arena)**

In the very last years of Russian rule a few small groups of federalist-autonomists did indeed form in Vilnius. They included Lithuanians, Belarusians, Poles, and a few Jews. Some questions discussed were the autonomy or independence of Russia’s northwestern provinces and the kingdom of Poland. The issues contested were the type of Lithuania’s future autonomy, its political extent, and its ethnopolitical constitution. Although the Lithuanians increasingly backed the concept of an ethnic Lithuania the Jews rejected it, proposing a broader autonomous territory—including as much of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania as possible—as part of the Russian empire remade in a constitutional and federative form.¹⁶ Tsemah Szabad (1864–1935), then a member of the liberal Constitutional Democratic Party (KD; *Konstitutsionno Demokraticheskaia partiia*) and one of the active Jewish leaders in such encounters, stated that due to the negligible number of Jewish representatives, as well as the secret character of the meetings, the group made no impact on the “Jewish street.”¹⁷ Contrary to the Polish question, for instance, the question of what kind of Lithuania should come into being remained esoteric for the Jewish public in Vilnius.

At the very beginning of German rule in Vilnius, Lithuanian national leaders such as Jonas Vileišis (1872–1942), a populist; Ausgustinas Janulaitis a member of LSDP (1878–1950), and Jurgis Šaulys (1879–1948), a Democrat, met with Belarusian representatives (among others the brothers Anton [1884–1942] and Ivan [1881–1919] Luckiewich) and two Jewish KD members: Tsemah Szabad and Grigorii Romm (1862–1930). They created the “Interim Council of the Confederacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.”¹⁸ In December 1915 the new organization called for “the creation of an independent state on the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.”¹⁹ The demand was published in a proclamation entitled “Universal” in four languages (Lithuanian, Belarusian, Yiddish, and Polish).²⁰ The document’s tendency toward independence is clear, as is its interpretation of “Lithuanian” as civic and inclusive.²¹ It proposed full and equal national rights for all its nationalities, facilitating the inclusion of local Jews who demanded such rights. The publication of a Yiddish version of the document, and the mention of Jewish representatives in the organization, could have been interpreted as approval by the latter of such a requirement.

However, that was apparently not the case. Tsemah Szabad stated in the beginning of 1918 (when it was clear that some kind of a Lithuanian political entity would arise and Jewish representatives were discussing how to be incorporated in it) that the leaflet's content was not supported by all the participants of the organization. He wrote, "Some of them [the members of the organization] published a proclamation with strong separatist tendencies, [so] the few Jewish members of the organization [Szabad himself and Romm] refused to sign such a document."²² It was their way to express their disagreement with the leanings of independence, whatever the concept "independence" means in those tortuous days.

The proclamation was followed in February 1916 by a more articulate and clear demand for an independent state, with a parliament in Vilnius, which should cover, broadly, the region administered by the German military occupation regime (*Oberost*). The new proclamation demanded the creation of a new political entity embracing the governorate of Kaunas and Vilnius, the ethnically Lithuanian parts of the Suwalki and Grodno governorate, the northwestern part of the Minsk governorate, as well as part of Kurland (giving the envisioned entity access to the Baltic Sea). It asserted that the new entity should guarantee "full rights to all the nations residing in the land," without expressly mentioning the national components of the planned state.²³ This proclamation, demanding an independent state geographically demarcated mainly by the Lithuanian and Belarusian ethnic elements, was totally ignored by Szabad, and probably Romm too, the Jewish leaders close to that council. It seems that they were not even informed of it.²⁴

In spite of the disagreement on the future "Lithuania," Szabad, and Romm's dialogue continued in various institutions, partially legitimized by the new German authorities, organized on an ethnic foundation.²⁵ The ethnification process intensified during the German occupation among the Jews was reinforced by the partial recognition by German forces of the Yiddish language, implementation of schooling on an ethnic basis, and the Russian language losing ground among the Russified sectors of Jewish society (or at least increasing de-legitimization of its use), on the one hand. On the other hand, there was internal consolidation of the Jewish organizations in each of the main cities of the *Oberost*, which gave rise to broad recognition of the national character of the Jews.

According to Szabad the Jewish public was mainly indifferent to the independence trends of Lithuanian leadership in Lithuania until early 1917, when the local Jewish leadership began to realize that it should address the question of Lithuania's future.²⁶ Due to the February revolution

in Russia, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the deliberations in Petrograd of Lithuanian representatives—the so-called little Sejmas, which proclaimed the Lithuanian national demand of home-rule—the Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite (Jewish Cultural Union in Lithuania) was established in Vilnius in March 1917. It was a semilegal Jewish umbrella organization, “with no distinction of streams and tendencies, all the living forces ignoring differences of property or class,” whose main task was to discuss and articulate the Jewish position on the new political developments.²⁷

Boris Halpern (1868–1944), the organization’s driving force, offered his view as a starting point on the question of the region’s political future. In a letter to the top leaders and organizations of Vilnius Jewry he set out his views on the connection of the region to other states. He formulated a statement similar to that of Szabad, with whom he was in close dialogue, “We should believe that the flourishing of our fatherland will be federative.”²⁸ He was aware that his political standpoint was debatable; however he emphasized the necessity to create a broad forum in order to find a common phrasing of the Jewish demands that would particularly present a minimal program of Vilnius Jewry, and generally of *Litvak* Jewry.²⁹

Following his call, in April 1917, a group of Jewish democrats (mainly former KD members) and socialist circles formulated a proclamation. In it they proposed an agenda of five main questions: (1) How should Lithuania be instituted? (2) How should it be administered? (3) How should national-cultural autonomy be implemented? (4) How should the Jewish national institutions (the *Kehilleh*, Jewish organized community) be instituted? (5) What means should be proposed to the Jews for the reconstruction and development of the destroyed Jewish economy?³⁰ As a whole, these questions were intended to answer the question: “What kind of Lithuania?”

In the early summer of 1917 the union wrote its platform in answer to the questions. First and foremost it emphasized that “taking into account the vital interests of our region, Lithuania should be an integral part of Russia,”³¹ to be transformed, following the revolution, into a federation of nationalities: a democratic republic. They proposed that Lithuania be one of the components of such a federation, in which each nationality would obtain cultural-national autonomy and would be governed by its own institutions. The main institution of the Jewish nationality would be the Jewish community, the *Kehilleh*.³²

Echoing Dubnowian ideas, the union’s political orientation was to Russia, with the demand that it be kept whole. From this point others were

derived. The first was the requirement of a “nationalities state,” as distinct from a “national state” or a “bi-national state.” That meant a state none of whose nationalities enjoyed any advantage or preference. Each nationality would administer its “national” needs without consideration of its distribution throughout the country.

Their main concern was that a national or bi-national state would oppress the Jewish minority on two levels: cultural, in that it would enforce assimilation; and economic, in that it would lead to discrimination in the reconstruction of the devastated economy (after two years of rapacious German occupation), as well as continuation of the economic exclusion of the Jews. Belonging to Russia would guarantee the minority status of all the nations in the new democratic Russia, composed of dozens of nations. The traditional economic ties of the Vilnius region with the Russian market would offer a good chance of reconstructing economic life in a broad economic frame. Otherwise its detachment from the Russian market would aggravate the crisis.³³ Their position was shared by political leaders of other Vilnius nationalities.³⁴ We do not know exactly who the addressees of the platform were; they could have been socialists and democrats from the Lithuanian and Belarusian movements, who maintained contact with Bundist and Jewish democrat leaders.

As is well-known, in late July 1917 the Germans decided to set up in Lithuania a “purely Lithuanian Trustee Council.” It convened at once. Its members explicitly mentioned the Russian orientation of Jewish politics to explain why the Jews were not invited to join it. Petras Klimas (1861–1969) said, “The Jews... looked only after their own interests and wanted to join Russia, even though they are ethnically different from the Russians. The Jews thus had no interest in Lithuanian independence, so the Taryba’s bureau did not consult with them.”³⁵ Antanas Smetona (1874–1944) expressed his view that the Jews were “an indifferent element” that would not promote the “Lithuanian national interest.”³⁶ From the socio-political point of view of Klimas, Smetona, and their fellows, “Lithuanian” was taken in its ethnic meaning, and in terms of geopolitics it was interpreted as its ethnographic spread. The editorial of the first issue of *Lietuvos Aidas* stated that the medieval Grand Duchy—“the old Lithuania from the Baltic to the Black Sea”—“cannot return” and was just “a beautiful historical memory. Today, we Lithuanians wish to live within those borders long inhabited by native Lithuanians. The foreign elements among us are the minorities, whose corresponding rights we will recognize, as is the case in other free, democratic states.”³⁷ Such a statement was unacceptable to all the Jewish parties without exception. First, it indicated that

the ethnic Lithuanians would decide the extent of Lithuania without negotiating with the other inhabitants of the region. Second, it treated other ethnic groups as foreigners, therefore incompetent to present their own visions and political projects. The interests of the local Jews were regarded as foreign linked to foreign interests and their visions regarding the territorial scope were considered egoistic. Such an ethno-Lithuanian political project was far from the vision then expressed by the Jewish parties and political leanings.

On 18–22 September 1917 a Lithuanian conference was held in Vilnius under German approval with the participation of 222 (ethnic) Lithuanians. This composition, and the position adopted by the *Lietuvos Taryba* (the twenty members Council of Lithuania elected by the conference), sparked a Jewish political response. The *Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite* called for a meeting of opponents of the new Lithuanian institution on the eve of the Lithuanian conference. All the Jewish political organizations (*Bund*, *Paolei Tzion*, Jewish democrats, as well as Zionists³⁸) attended the gathering, as did representatives of (mainly leftist) parties of other nationalities (Lithuanian Social Democracy, Russian Social Democracy, Belarusian Social Democracy, Social Revolutionary (SR) Party, a representative of the Polish socialists, Polish democrats [*Polskie Stronnictwo Demokratyczne na Litwie*], Belarusian *Hromada*). To legitimate the meeting twelve speakers delivered a speech, each in their own language, illustrating thereby the desired model of Lithuania: an ethnically egalitarian state. After the debate a resolution was adopted that questioned the legitimacy of the Lithuanian conference because it was not democratically constituted and because it ignored representatives of the other ethnonational groups. That way, Lithuania was understood in its geohistorical meaning, and the *Taryba*'s ethnonational concept was rejected. The resolution emphasized that "the political autonomy of Lithuania, on the grounds of democracy ... could properly meet the national and cultural needs of all the nations of Lithuania: Lithuanian, Belarusian, Polish, and Jewish."³⁹ The main claim was that only an assembly "democratically elected by all the inhabitants of Lithuania and Belarus, with no discrimination on the base of nationality, religion, and sex," was entitled to decide "on the future fate of Lithuania, her domestic organization, her relations with bordering states, and the principles of cohabitation with neighboring countries."⁴⁰

The representatives of the political parties formulated a declaration that addressed the main bone of contention concerning the future fate of the region. Interestingly, Rosenboim, the representative of the Zionists, was absent when the resolutions were formulated and did not sign them.⁴¹ It

was, probably, due to the anti-German tone of the discussions. The first point of the declaration underlined the geopolitical scope of the region: Lithuania and Belarus. However, the difficulty in demarcating the exact geographical limits is explicit in the resolution: "The definitive demarcation of the limits should take into account the totality of the economic and cultural interests of all the country's [national] communities."⁴² It seems that there was no discussion of the political structure of "Lithuania and Belarus," which should include minority rights.⁴³ Relations with Russia and Germany were discussed. The resolution stipulated that these should be decided in a democratically and universally elected constitutive assembly. The legitimacy of the Lithuanian conference was questioned, and its measures were deemed "usurpation."⁴⁴

The Jewish democrats of the Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite crystallized as the Folkist party, adopting its main ideas from Dubnowian theory and proposals. The party was lead by Tsemah Szabad and Boris Halperin and it declared its objection to the German orientation of the Lithuanian assembly, reaffirmed by Smetona in Berlin in November 1917.⁴⁵ The new Jewish organization rejected the German orientation for two reasons: national and economic. The former because the German Reich did not recognize its Jewish minority as a national minority, and enforced its acculturation. The latter because of the economic destruction by the German occupation and because the incorporation of Lithuanian territory into the Prussian orbit would perpetuate the economic disadvantage.⁴⁶

Likewise they opposed another orientation presented by the Polish national circles: the union with Poland, primarily because of refusing to acknowledge the Jews as a national minority.⁴⁷ Polish political circles in Warsaw, as well as Jewish members of the integrationist camp there, tossed around the possibility of influencing the Jewish population in Vilnius toward a Polish orientation.⁴⁸ At a confidential meeting in Warsaw on the political orientation of the Jews of the eastern borderlands, some of the Jews of the integrationist camp, which probably initiated the meeting (such as Stanisław Kempner [1857–1924]), proposed that Polish authorities make concession on the cultural level since between *Litvaks* and Poles "the cultural difference should be considered."⁴⁹ Others (such as Bolesław Eiger [1868–1922] a renowned figure among Warsaw's assimilationists) recommended "recognition of some minimal national rights for the Jews."⁵⁰ The leading Polish figures in the meeting, such as Ludomir Grendyszyński (1859–1922), a member of Temporary Committee of the Provisional Council of State (Komisja Przejściowa Tymczasowej Rady Stanu), rejected such propositions.⁵¹ Ludwik Abramowicz (Liudvikas

Abramavičius), who was present at the above gathering, maintained, as expected, that the Jewish question in Lithuania and Belarus was inseparable from that of the future of the country. He held that the Jewish population would not adhere to a position contradictory to the majority of the local population, so it would be influenced by their attitude toward Poland. "The masses in Lithuania and Belarus incline toward Russia," he said, explaining in another way the ostensibly Russian orientation of the Jewish local population. He doubted, accordingly, that "the Jewish element in Lithuania, which in great extent is Russified, especially its intelligentsia, will declare itself in favor of the idea of Polish statehood."⁵² As a result of the Polish grouping, Eliahu Olschwanger (1878–1952), one of the editors of the only Vilnius Yiddish daily, wrote, "We do not want to be transformed into 'Polish Jews.' We want the same national and social rights as the Poles and to defend our particular character ... as the Poles defend theirs."⁵³ He went on, "We do not want union with Poland ... but if Vilnius is attached to Poland we will recruit all the Jews in order to defend our Jerusalem of Lithuania which is so precious to us, like Warsaw or Cracow are precious to the Poles."⁵⁴

The Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite, and its successor the Folkist party, based their rejection on the Polish orientation mainly on two factors: economic and national. Economically, they argued, Lithuania "has never had anything in common with Poland [!]" ; moreover, the tendency to exclude the Jews from the economic life in Poland was due to its worsening antisemitism there. Nationally, they objected because of the wholesale refusal of the Polish parties to recognize the Jews as a nation, with the concomitant result of depriving them of their legitimate national rights.⁵⁵

The Jewish democrats grouped around the Folkist party supported the Russian orientation. They proposed the constitution of a "Lithuanian democratic Republic," generally defined geographically according to the historic borders of the Grand Duchy. It would be part of a federative union with Russia (and implicitly with other republics that would be inherited of the old Russian imperial order). That kind of federation would resolve the economic limitations of the Lithuanian territory, as well as satisfying its requirements. The Russian context would provide Lithuania with energy, an outlet to the sea, and good fluvial communications; it would also serve as the main market of the local industry and manufacture,⁵⁶ and "because of the new and great economic opportunities open in the new and free Russia."⁵⁷ The Folkists emphasized that the new democratic Russia would constitute an appropriate context for the national rights of all the nations

in Lithuania.⁵⁸ In contraposition, Germany did not recognize the Jews' national rights.⁵⁹

Only part of the Zionists expressed a similar orientation. Jakub Wygodzki was probably the most notorious Zionist who disagreed with a German orientation.⁶⁰ However, the two main central figures of Vilnius Zionism and outstanding leaders of Vilnius Jewry, the chairman and vice chairman of the Central Committee of Vilnius Jewry during the years of the German occupation: Shimshon Rosenboim and Rabbi Yitshak Rubinstein (1880–1945), the leading figure of Orthodox Zionist Vilnius Jewry, adopted a German orientation.

In December 1917 the Bund and the Vilnius branch of the LSDP held a joint meeting. The resolutions rejected the possibility that the borders of the state would be determined according to the configuration of the front-line and wartime circumstances and not according to the “vital necessities and the economic, social, and cultural interests of all the population of Lithuania-Belarus.”⁶¹ Such a decision, which supported a united “Greater Lithuania” project, reflected mainly the Bund position, but it also expressed some marginal voices in the Lithuanian national movement, which presented another, less heard, project. It proposed inclusion of all ethnic groups with no ethnic hierarchy in the construction of the state, and legitimization of their different interests.

In Vilnius the Taryba composed of twenty members, all ethnic Lithuanians stipulated that five or six representatives of the national minorities (including two Jews) should be co-opted.⁶² In Berlin Taryba members vaguely asserted that “the national minorities in Lithuania should be guaranteed the conditions satisfying their cultural necessities.”⁶³ Such phrasing did not satisfy the Jews' concern over forced acculturation; still more dangerous in their eyes was political exclusion and economic marginalization based on ascription. Furthermore, the widely publicized words of Smetona in Berlin, who did not mention autonomy but merely “equal rights” for the minorities in general and the Jews in particular, did nothing to mitigate the suspicion and alienation of the Jewish elite from Lithuanian leadership.⁶⁴ On the contrary, Šaulys's explanation—that “all the legal limitations based on national or religious denomination will be abolished and that the national minorities will be guaranteed civil equality [emancipation] and also freedom in their cultural life will be completely guaranteed”⁶⁵—deepened the suspicion that national autonomy as envisaged by the Jewish leadership would not be considered. Rather, the western model of emancipation would be adopted, with pressure for acculturation. Anxieties continued to worsen due to the interpretation of the

“Lithuanian interest” as agricultural, while craft and commerce, economic branches with an enormous Jewish presence, were ignored. The claim that Lithuanian agricultural products would find markets in Germany, rather than the competition its products would encounter in some kind of economic union with agricultural Russia, intensified the suspicion.⁶⁶ Such economic explanations alienated Jewish circles, like the Folkists, who explained the economic interest as precisely the opposite.

The conditions for representatives to be co-opted to the Taryba deepened the mistrust even more, “The representatives of the minorities in the Taryba must agree with the resolution of Lithuanian independence; they must not take part in any anti-Lithuanian activities, and must, at least, understand Lithuanian.”⁶⁷ Although the ethnic Lithuanian position, or at least independence, was determined as the only valid means to implement the “Lithuanian” interest, other positions were ruled invalid or illegitimate. In such a context it was harder to urge the Jewish elite to a rapprochement. Another condition was interpreted as a means of exclusion, namely knowledge of Lithuanian. This was key because of the poor knowledge of the language in the local Jewish population. Petras Klimas in the *Lietuvos Aidas*, echoing Smetona (its editor-in-chief),⁶⁸ stated in an article, “It cannot be permitted that because of the minorities the Lithuanians will be forced to use a foreign language.” The article was published in Yiddish translation in Vilnius only Yiddish daily *Letzte Nayer*⁶⁹ to make known the exclusionist tendencies of leading figures in the Lithuanian national movement. Such figures ignored the fact that the autonomy proposed by the Jewish leaders was in no way intended to acculturate the Lithuanians but to defend the minority’s culture from the acculturative pressure of the state. Moreover, Smetona stipulated in an article also translated into Yiddish that “Non-territorial minorities [a euphemism for the Jewish minority], as distinct from the territorial minorities, will not be allowed to use their language in their official relations to the state authorities. They should be satisfied with the use of their language within the bounds of their cultural needs.”⁷⁰ This meant there was to be no recognition or consideration of Yiddish, the vernacular broadly used by local Jews in any official realm (even in the cities where the Jews constituted a majority or a significant part of the population) provoking disadvantage to the Jewish public in a nationalizing state. It will not be established nor will cultural autonomy be considered the specific Jewish interest; or worse, they will be disqualified as “foreign” or “non-Lithuanian.”⁷¹ Such statements, widely distributed among the readers of the only Yiddish newspaper in the region, distanced them from the Lithuanian aims as pre-

sented by these foremost Lithuanian leaders. Voices like those of the Social Democrat Steponas Kairys (1879–1964), who were unhappy with the basic decision of social exclusion of the minorities and the construction of an ethnic hierarchy of citizens, were not heard in the Jewish public sphere.⁷² The chasm between the Lithuanian Taryba and the Jewish political leadership deepened.

“For the Jews it was clear that Lithuania would not be what it was,” stated Tsemah Szabad with grief and deep sadness in late 1917, in reference to the recent political events.⁷³ Tsemah Szabad, the leader of the Vilnius Folkists, expressed his disappointment with his Lithuanian partners from the early days of the German occupation, the time of the Interim Council of the Confederacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, namely the aforementioned Jurgis Šaulys and Jonas Vileišis. “Whereas the Lithuanian leaders, Dr. Šaulys, Ing. Kairys, and lawyer Vileišis, with whom the Jewish democrats had gone together theretofore, have become members of the council composed of twenty ethnic Lithuanians, the question being asked whether the Jews should go to such a council.”⁷⁴ By joining the Taryba, Jonas Vileišis and Steponas Kairys provoked Szabad’s dismay; however, both members, because of their civic tendencies, could enhance those of the institution from within, rather than its exclusive ethnocentric nationalistic tendencies, defended by the majority of its members.⁷⁵

“The Lithuanians [Litviner] were elected by their especial assembly... The question stirred the political consciousness of the Jews of Vilnius, and many of them understood that other than bread-and-butter matters, which sustain today’s existence, questions related to the future should be elucidated. Such questions should not be answered by individuals but by an assembly of representatives of all the Jews from Lithuania in its entirety.”⁷⁶ It should be an assembly that would answer the question which Lithuania the Jewish population desired.

“The Jews Accept the Autonomy of Lithuania”: Zionist Organization and the German Authorities

Arthur Hantke (1874–1955), one of the leaders of German Zionism and one who enjoyed good contacts in the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin, visited Vilnius after learning of the Lithuanian conference held there in September 1917. He wished to hear the impressions of the Vilnius Zionists about the latest political developments. Following his conversations he presented the *Oberost* authorities with the Jewish position. Echoing the

Vilnius Zionists, and on behalf of Lithuanian Jewry, he called for the annexation of the Białystok-Grodno regions to Lithuania since the Vilnius Zionists rejected the interpretation of Lithuania according to its ethnonational lines, favoring instead its historical terrain as much as possible. Hantke stressed that the Jewish population would not agree to the “division of the Lithuanian Jewry into two halves,” a division “that weakens the influence of each of the two halves.”⁷⁷

On behalf of Lithuanian Jewry, Hantke requested its recognition as a national minority by the Taryba and the concomitant co-optation of Jewish representatives in accordance with their percentage in the population (1/6, i.e., four representatives out of twenty-four). Those representatives should be elected by an all-Lithuanian Jewish national conference that should include representatives of the Grodno-Białystok administrative zone.⁷⁸

Hantke remarked that Lithuanian Jewry understood that the “autonomy of Lithuania” was being discussed even in Russia where it was broadly approved, “and the Jews accepted such a decision.”⁷⁹ This point is very important because it was the position of some Jewish circles, mainly Zionists like Rosenboim, close to Hantke, who agreed to some kind of autonomous Lithuanian entity, attached to Germany in consequence of the geopolitical circumstances. The word “autonomy,” meaning in this case territorial autonomy, more so reflects the limited sovereignty implicit in the geopolitical reality of late 1917 than the opposition to independence; an unrealistic political aim at that time. Hantke explained that the Lithuanian Jews rejected a Polish orientation because of the tightening tension between the two nations and the absolute impossibility of finding any Polish partner to Jewish claims of national rights; by contrast, the Jews were ready to engage in a struggle with the Lithuanians for their rights if the latter would reject them. The Jews would reject any constitutional arrangement that did not guarantee their national rights.⁸⁰

Hermann Struck (1876–1944), a German Zionist member of the KfdO, appointed referent for Jewish affairs at the German headquarters in Kaunas,⁸¹ communicated to Hantke the tendencies in the German administration with regard to Hantke’s arguments and demands while trying to influence his (Struck’s) superiors. The German administration of the region called “Lithuania” (then roughly coinciding with the Kaunas, Suwałki, and Vilnius governorates occupied by Germany) acquiesced to the inclusion of Jewish representatives (three were mentioned) at the proposed Jewish conference of Lithuanian Jewry, but the German administration in the Białystok-Grodno zone rejected out of hand the petition for Jewish

representation from there. Those German authorities said the inclusion of Jewish delegates would spur the representation of other undesirable elements, especially Poles, in the Taryba. More so they feared that the convening of a conference of Jews from both German administrative zones would promote the vision of Greater Lithuania along the lines of the Jewish project; this was entirely different from that of the Germans, or at least the project the Germans were intent on accomplishing through the Taryba. The controversy in the German administration prevented a decision being taken.⁸² Wilhelm v. Gayl (1879–1945), head of the political section in the German administration, wrote to Hantke, “Each of the questions is so intertwined with the others that now it is not possible to make a decision concerning one of them without addressing the others. That holds true especially regarding the question of the Jewish conference.”⁸³ The paltry gains of the German Zionists weakened the position of the Vilnius Zionists. The Folkist camp in Vilnius was the one acquiring an increasingly central role.

A Lithuanian Nationalities State Instead of an Ethnonational Lithuania

Considering the new conditions, Vilnius Jewry was compelled to articulate some response. The most urgent question was whether to join the Taryba by sending two Jewish representatives or not. The central committee of Vilnius Jewry decided that such a cardinal decision should be taken by the broadest possible sectors of the Jewish public. A special meeting of the central committee was called, with representation of all the different organizations and political groups: from Zionists to Bundists; from the religious to the ultra-secular, the wealthy, the middle-class, and the proletariat; from welfare organizations to cultural, economic, and professional groupings.⁸⁴

Despite the differences and nuances across the wide range of representatives, the committee did accept a resolution. The very fact of a common decision and the presentation of a united Jewish front were considered a success among themselves.⁸⁵ The meeting resolved to reject the proposition to send Jewish representatives to the Taryba,⁸⁶ as “other minorities rejected it, too.”⁸⁷ This decision was taken despite the somewhat contrary inclination of the chairman, Rabbi Yitshak Rubinstein.⁸⁸ Rubinstein unofficially agreed in principle with the Lithuanian proposal of co-option, regardless of his deep concerns about the timing of such a political step.

He was highly mindful of the potential results of such a move in the prevailing conditions. Nevertheless, resisting the pressure of the liberal wing of leaders of German Jewry (James Simon [1851–1932], Paul Nathan [1857–1927]) to accept the Lithuanian proposition, he commented, “It is impossible to go along with the Lithuanians and not to create mortal enmity with the Belarusians and the Poles.”⁸⁹ In other words, he was not against the idea of joining the Taryba in principle if the Jewish minority will be entitled to real minority rights guaranteeing real equality. However, he wished to coordinate such a step with representatives of the other minorities.⁹⁰

On 29 October 1917 the representatives of Vilnius Jewry (Shimshon Rosenboim and Yitshak Rubinstein, both Zionists, and Tsemah Szabad, a Folkist) delivered their resolution to Jonas Vileišis, a member of the Taryba. The resolution underlined the illegitimate character of the Taryba as a nondemocratically elected assembly, and its narrow character that disregarded part of Lithuanian territory. But it did open the possibility of cooperation, indicating that it could be implemented “after calling a Jewish national conference in Vilnius, freely elected by the totality of the Jewish population authorized by the military administrations of Lithuania and Białystok-Grodno.”⁹¹ This summarizes the main Jewish conditions: a democratic machinery, national recognition, and a broader Lithuania conceived as much as possible in historical, not ethnographic terms. The latter two expressed the conception of Lithuanian nationalities state instead of an ethnonational Lithuania. According to Petras Klimas, Rosenboim said that the Jews “are not satisfied with two or three representatives,” adding that according to Rosenboim the Jews also demanded “a broad Lithuania with Minsk, Vitebsk, and Mogilev. They also want a national curia.”⁹²

Concurrently, the same Jewish representatives submitted a petition to the head of the German military administration, asking for authorization to convene a “national conference freely elected by the totality of the Jewish population in *Oberost*.”⁹³

The formation of a united Jewish front in face of the politics of the Taryba and the *Oberost* authorities was certainly an internal achievement, highly appreciated by different Jewish political leaders.⁹⁴ The main requirements publicly presented by the Jews were a broad Lithuania—geographically (historic Lithuania or at least the *Oberost* region) and socially (ethnically egalitarian, guaranteed minority rights)—with institutions democratically elected. The general Jewish consensus made unclear the internal debate over important issues. First and foremost was the question of national autonomy, which in fact united all the parties and factions,

but divided them, too. It united them because in Vilnius not a single Jewish faction existed that denied the necessity of national autonomy, from the ultrareligious faction at one extreme to acculturated or Russified Jews at the other. All demanded national autonomy. The question was, what kind of autonomy? The two main models were either personal or cultural.

The most moderate cultural model was that of the Bund. It claimed cultural autonomy based on recognition of Yiddish as a state language, to be equally used in all state institutions (thus becoming transformed into a societal language).⁹⁵ On the practical level it meant formalization of the communication between the bureaucratic apparatus and any individual addressing it in that individual's vernacular—in our case Yiddish. Second, it demanded Yiddish state schooling and an institutional body democratically elected to administer it. The Bund set no economic condition beyond the cultural level, very broadly understood. The demand for cultural rights did not reflect separatism, it explained. Quite the contrary, acknowledgment of the difference would facilitate the accommodation of the Jewish nation, and paradoxically the class identification of the individual freed from ethnocultural oppression.

At the opposite end was the Zionist and Folkist model of broad personal autonomy. This would include equal recognition of the Yiddish language implicit in the cultural autonomy program, including Yiddish or Hebrew schooling (among the Zionists, Rosenboim astutely proposed postponing the discussion avoiding the unproductive debate on Hebrew or Yiddish,⁹⁶ the Folkist party stated explicitly that it did not matter⁹⁷). It should include, too, some mechanisms to secure equal distribution of state resources among all the citizens regardless of their national ascription. For example, they called for a national curia or the formation of national cadastres to guarantee the proportional representation of the Jews in the parliament-to-be and in other elected institutions.⁹⁸ They also asked for the creation of institutions devoted to the reconstruction of the local economy, which should statutorily include Jewish representatives to ensure no deprivation or discrimination of the Jewish population in such a process.⁹⁹ Zionists and Folkists were profoundly worried about exclusionist tendencies in various strata of the Lithuanian national movement, especially the intensification of efforts to exclude Jews from their middleman role by creating ethnically composed consumer cooperatives. "National autonomy should defend the Jews against bankruptcy. The economic struggle against the Jews began, unfortunately, with the support of the German authorities," Zionists stated in an anti-German tone.¹⁰⁰ In such a case, stated Rubinstein in Berlin, the western model of emancipation and equal civil

rights would not defend the Jews against exclusionist tendencies in the future Lithuanian state.¹⁰¹ For such reasons he underlined the necessity to ensure participation of Jewish representatives in all official (state and municipal) institutions.¹⁰² Before a forum in Berlin of leading Zionist figures and members of the socialist parties of the German parliament, Rubinstein stated his belief that “the constitution of an electoral curia and proportional representation of the Jews in the parliament and administration give us the certitude that the rights constitutionally allocated will be truly and practically accomplished.”¹⁰³

Other than the reasons that united Folkists and Zionists in their advocacy of the personal variant of the national autonomy, the latter contained one more. Moyshe Shalit (1885–1941), echoing the *Vozrozhdenie* discussion a decade earlier, explained that Zionist work had two aspects. The first was “the Land of Israel and Hebrew language as the two main elements”; the second was “national personal autonomy [which] is a road to Zionism, to the ‘Zionization’ of Jewish life, [and then] to the Land of Israel. Sooner or later the Jewish Sejm [the democratically elected assembly of the Jewish autonomy that was to function as a parliament] and the Jewish autonomous institutions in the Jewish communities ... will take part in the regulation of Jewish emigration to the Land of Israel and in the colonization of the Land of Israel.”¹⁰⁴ In other words, personal autonomy would be an instrument to carry out the territorialization of the Jewish people. According to the Zionists’ strategy, personal autonomy, as a compulsory state institution, would provide the necessary means to support the Zionist project in the Land of Israel.

As mentioned above, another bone of contention was the orientation—Russian or German?¹⁰⁵ The Russian orientation of the Jewish leadership was a constant theme in the Lithuanian leadership.¹⁰⁶ Martynas Yčas (1885–1941) was cited as threatening to implement a Lithuanian boycott against the Jews, intended to undermine such a “Jewish” orientation, “convincing” them in that way to support an independent state.¹⁰⁷ The Russian orientation was indeed dominant among members of two Jewish parties: the Bund and the Folkists. Both expressed it openly. The Bund publicly stated its support for the federative option in an all-Russian frame. For example, on the eve of May Day in 1917, the Bund proposed a struggle for “a free autonomous Lithuania united with Russia.”¹⁰⁸

The Folkists published a similar statement in January 1918, “The economic and political perspectives lead us to clearly state our position regarding the democratic Russian Republic and say that only in the frame of a federation with it [Russia] will the economy and culture of Lithuania

flourish.”¹⁰⁹ Both organizations kept up a dialogue with the Lithuanian political leadership. The Bund maintained close ties with the Lithuanian social democrats,¹¹⁰ the Folkists with the liberals—particularly Szabad, who kept in touch with Vileišis.¹¹¹ Thus their positions were well-known outside the Jewish community.

In contrast to the sometimes noisy Russian orientation of the Bund and the Folkists, others, mainly Zionists (but not all the Zionists),¹¹² supported a German orientation. This gradually gained strength from the second half of 1917, being much more central after the collapse of the Provisional Government in Russia and the increasing fear of the Soviets. Rosenboim and Rubinstein, both leading figures among the Vilnius Zionists, supported this leaning, which meant the insertion of Lithuania in one or more versions of the German Mitteleuropa plan. They were very cautious in vaunting it. Outwardly they asserted that they feared a strident expression could harm the Jewish refugees from Lithuania in Russia.¹¹³ However, the low popularity of the German forces among the local Jews, due to the rapacity of the German occupation,¹¹⁴ probably did not allow them to make manifest their German orientation. Such half-hearted support on the part of Jewish leadership in Vilnius created the image that the Jews held an anti-German political attitude.¹¹⁵ Nahman Rachmilewitz (an orthodox Jew connected to the *Agudah* who paid the *shekel* and as such was considered a Zionist, but at the same time was a founding member of the Folkist party) emphasized another explanation for the growing German political orientation. He asserted that the Bolshevik revolution had propelled part of Jewish public opinion towards a German orientation.¹¹⁶

Orientation of this sort dictated the predisposition to accommodate the various demands. Russian-oriented Jews rejected the Taryba's authority because, in addition to the reasons mentioned above, that body was allegedly German-oriented.¹¹⁷ Most of the Russian-oriented Jewish political leadership considered the Taryba an institution lacking authority even over the ethnic Lithuanians. However, the German-oriented Jewish leaders tended to compromise with the Taryba, because they realized that its main source of authority was the German regime, which would dictate the resolution of the situation according to its interests and will. In such a case it was preferable to accommodate the Jewish aims and needs to the new order.

The differences and disputes within the Jewish community were hardly heard outside. The voices inside the Jewish community that were open to some dialogue and possible compromise were not presented outside the inner circles. For instance, when their attitude toward the Taryba was dis-

cussed among Kaunas' Zionists, the opinion that demanded an approach to the liberal members of the Taryba was not heard out of the organization.¹¹⁸ Rosenboim's tendencies toward compromise, too, were overshadowed by others, more reluctant to compromise (e.g., Szabad). Moreover, while Rosenboim and Rubinstein in the inner corridors pushed for some kind of arrangement vis-à-vis the Lithuanians, when negotiating with them they presented a noncompromising position as an inherent component of the political negotiations. This created a firm image in Lithuanian circles of Jewish opposition to Lithuanian dissociation from Russia.

"We Do Not Object to a Lithuanian State on the Condition That It Guarantees National Freedom and Equality"

The declaration of Lithuanian independence on 16 February 1918 intensified the anxiety of the Jewish population and the consolidation of a united Jewish political front in the immediate political circumstances. In an article published in the Yiddish daily in Vilnius, Eliahu Olschwanger (1878–1952), one of the newspaper's founders, treated the new state as an accomplished fact. He called for the consolidation of a united front of all the national minorities, presenting, if possible, a unified position on the new Lithuania-in-formation. Concerning the Jews, he asked principally for their recognition as a nationality since "all other Jewish demands are the outcome of this guiding principle—the autonomous administration and protection of the national, cultural, and economic interests of the Jews and the recognition and equality of Yiddish."¹¹⁹ However, to illumine this Jewish nationality, and establish it in practice, Olschwanger called for "the organization of the Jewish community in a democratic way and the convening of a Jewish conference of all Lithuanian Jewry, which will create a united organization... Only then will it become clear if there are differences among the demands of Lithuanian Jewry."¹²⁰ The Zionists vociferously demanded the reorganization of the Jewish community to deal with a wide spectrum of activities, under a political leadership democratically elected. Behind this requirement was the conception shaped in Helsingfors that such a community would serve as a basis on which to build personal autonomy.¹²¹

In consequence of a wide-ranging operation orchestrated by the Action Committee of the Zionist movement in Berlin and the KfdO from early spring until fall 1918, an account of which is beyond the scope of this chapter, the German authorities addressed the question of the special

rights of the Jews in the new Lithuanian state.¹²² The Reich Chancellery, under Secretary of State Freiherr von Falkenhausen (1869–1946), in his capacity as Reich Commissar for Lithuania, issued a declaration on 6 July 1918 to the representatives of the KfdO. He noted that the decision on the final internal relations between Lithuanians and others was the prerogative of the Lithuanian state. However, in “Greater Lithuania” (Litauen grössere Umgang) for “all the national minorities civil equality, freedom of religion and care of their character and traditions will be kept,” and “therefore, the Jewish nationality will be entitled to autonomous arrangements concerning its cultural concerns” and “an extensive cultural autonomy.”¹²³ Moyshe Shalit, editor-in-chief of the Vilnius Hebrew Zionist weekly *Unzer Ossid*, applauded the declaration: the triumphant Great Power recognized the Jews as a nation entitled to national rights. Therefore, it acknowledged Lithuania as a nationalities state instead of a nation-state, “a state that encompasses four main nations. [W]hen one of the nations, the Lithuanians [Litviner], is constituted as the ruling nation, then the happiness of the land could be reached only through national autonomy for all the other nations.”¹²⁴ Shalit underlined that the Jews were acknowledged as entitled to cultural autonomy, but indicated that a broader autonomous frame, namely personal autonomy, would come within reach through the implementation of cultural autonomy. For the German-oriented Lithuanian Zionists, cultural autonomy alone could not shore up the delicate Jewish position in the new state-in-formation, still defend the Jews less against the exclusionist trends of the ethnocentric Taryba.

The implementation of Falkenhausen’s declaration impelled Vilna’s Jewish leaders to negotiate with the Taryba and reach a compromise. Clearly, the German authorities would not intervene openly in such an issue.¹²⁵ Paul Nathan pressed the Lithuanian Zionists to negotiate with the Taryba. Rosenboim explained to him that the Jews were ready for co-option to the Taryba and for working together with the Litviner against Polish claims to the country. He even stressed that “the Jews will advocate the autonomy of the country with all their energy.”¹²⁶ By this phrase he once again revealed his tendency to support the autonomy of Lithuania in a German Mitteleuropa frame, according to his German political orientation. However, he stressed that the problem was not “to reach or not to reach” a compromise. “The question of recognition of the Jews as a nation and granting them national rights is not an abstract conceptual issue... it deals with real things, the safeguarding of existing rights and the creation of new ones.”¹²⁷ According to Rosenboim, in a letter to Hantke written in German, the main problem was that the Taryba dismissed the demand for

proportional representation because it did not accept the principle of equal citizenship. “[T]hey, regardless of us or others, are not ready to concede [to the national minorities] a sufficient number of votes [in the parliament]; this is because they refuse to give up formal sole rule and because they want to acknowledge the Litviner as the chosen people of Lithuania.”¹²⁸ Not by chance, as on many other occasions, did he choose the word Litviner, even when he wrote in German, instead of Lithuanians [Litauer]. This was to intimate that the Litviner were a fraction of the entire Lithuanian population, like the *Litvaks* (or the Poles or Belarusians), and that Lithuania should be designed as an egalitarian state that rejects ethnic hierarchy in access to and sharing in power. Moreover, he did not demand only formal acknowledgment, but practical. As an experienced social activist under the German occupation,¹²⁹ he was acutely aware of the gap between official recognition of national particularity and practical influence on the power system.

Echoing Rosenboim’s perception of power sharing, the *Jüdische Rundschau*, the leading Zionist weekly published in German in Berlin, stated, “[T]he question of self-determination, self-government has [finally] arisen”; “Lithuania has acquired a Land-Council chosen only by the Litviner, by-passing other nationalities... The Litviner ... have begun with politics, which might be highly dangerous for a country like Lithuania, inhabited by various nationalities possessing the same right to and the same wish for national life. Under no circumstances is there room for a ruling nation. From the very start it should be ensured that no nationality, not to mention those just liberated, will conduct a politics of imperialism and oppression and constraint.”¹³⁰ That acceptance of a new Lithuanian political entity became increasingly evident in the Jewish public sphere, especially among Zionists. However, as Olschwanger emphasized, “We do not object to a Lithuanian state, on condition that it guarantees national freedom and equality.”¹³¹

The question was connected to the Polish claims on the city and region and the reluctance of the local Jewish leadership to accept it. “To Whom Does Vilnius Belong?”¹³² asked Moyshe Shalit in a series of articles early in October 1918 when the question of Vilnius’ geopolitical attachment arose on account of the collapse of the German regime and indications that the Germans had left the question of the city’s future open.¹³³ Shalit directed his articles against the inclusion of the city in the Polish state and supported its being in a Lithuanian one. His argument highlighted Jewish support (as interpreted by Shalit) for the Lithuanian cause—with certain stipulations. His main claim was that Vilnius was no less Jewish than Pol-

ish; in fact, the Jews constituted the salient urban ethnic element “not only in Vilnius but in all the cities of Vilnius governorate.”¹³⁴ In contrast to the oppressive policy of a Polish regime, “[w]e affirm that among the national colors of Vilnius, the Jewish color takes its place... [W]hen the Poles come and want to get their hands on Vilnius ... we feel, first, our complete right to raise our voice and to show our color.”¹³⁵ He clearly emphasized that “Lithuania should be an autonomous state and Vilnius should be its capital! ... The focal point is not outside but inside, within Lithuania.”¹³⁶ In other words, in light of the Polish menace, the question was not “Lithuania—to be or not to be?” but “Which Lithuania?” How would it address and include all its citizens. With the German declaration that legitimized his claim, he asserted that the main factor for accommodating the national minorities in Lithuania, including the Jews, was “complete civil and national equality, equal conditions for the four nations in Lithuania and the remaining national minorities on the basis of national-personal autonomy. Lithuania in a viable form on a large scale is the only answer to the national needs in such a state formation.”¹³⁷ Without doubt, Shalit, like many other Zionists, basically did not alter the Zionist model of the desired state. The only significant change was acceptance of detachment from Russia, even among Zionists’ former supporters of the Russian orientation. However, it doesn’t mean the acceptance of the model of a Lithuanian state that envisaged the Taryba. Shalit wrote his articles at the height of general disorder, when anarchy was in the air and a Soviet menace was perceived by them.¹³⁸

The acceptance grew in late October and November 1918, after the German capitulation and the German revolution. Facing the last remnants of German pressure and an imminent threat from the Soviets, the Taryba showed some change to the minorities in its model. Under pressure it reluctantly phrased a model more inclusive, geographically and socially. The German authorities similarly pushed Rosenboim and Rubinstein to join the Taryba, and as a step in that direction¹³⁹ a Zionist conference took place in Vilna on 5–8 December.¹⁴⁰ It substituted the eternally requisite assembly of the all-Lithuania Jewish community. The representatives reflected the concept of Great Lithuania, which were represented organizations from Vilnius, Kaunas and Suwałki and from Grodno and Białystok, among other places. The conference resolutions reflected the desired “Lithuania,” which now was at the epicenter of the debates. With regard to the kind of autonomy a debate arose regarding the demand of the creation of a Jewish curia in the parliament. The youngest, the more radicals, and those who returned from Russia, like Josef Berger, tended to be

against it. It was considered a “reactionary” instrument, unnecessary in a truly democratic country. The older, like Wygodzki or Rosenboim, demanded it.¹⁴¹ In any case it was universally emphasized the necessity of “not only national autonomy, but the warranty of its implementation,” emphasizing, too, the necessity to be equal partners in the legislative process as well as in the governmental instances.¹⁴² The question of “which Lithuania,” regarding its geographical scope and structure arose in spontaneous debate. The young and promising Jacob Robinson (1889–1977) from Suwałki, presented his deep doubts concerning a federal solution to the territorial question.¹⁴³ It was a similar statement to that of the Kaunas Zionists who considered it unnecessary to debate such a question.¹⁴⁴ As expected, some representatives insisted on the historical borders of old Lithuania, although the reasons were not historical but ethnonational. A large Lithuania would encompass a greater number of Jews and be a more ethnically complex state. This would enlarge the number of Poles, which (according to the supporters of this proposition) would improve mutual relations between Poles and Jews. Some other unidentified voices, adopting the ethno-Lithuanian conceptualization, preferred a “smaller” Lithuania, an “ethnic Lithuania.” They based the argument for a “little” Lithuania” on fears of a Polish reaction, as well as the wish to show flexibility toward the Litviner who were more open to compromise. Moreover, if the Litviner were truly ready to share power it would be unnecessary to create a coalition of minorities in a broad and ethnically heterogeneous territory.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, inclusive discourse on the part of leading members of the Taryba brought forth certain expressions of flexibility among the Zionists regarding desired geographical scope of the Lithuanian state.

In the end, the resolutions of the Zionist conference spoke about a Greater Lithuania. The conferees envisaged a free and democratic Lithuania “based on full equality and national personal autonomy for its entire people (*national-personal Autonomie seiner Völker*),”¹⁴⁶ which reflected their vision of an ethnopolitical egalitarian state, in which even the Litviner would enjoy personal autonomy. Regarding Jews joining the Taryba, the stipulations were the following: “The Taryba must share our view concerning its competence,” that is, probably, addressing the question of Greater Lithuania; “proportional representation for all nationalities living in the country,”¹⁴⁷ that is, machinery that would guarantee equal inclusion in the political system; and “the Taryba will not hinder the proclamation of a Jewish Communal organization, the convening of a congress of Lithuanian Jewry and the creation of an institutional body of national-personal autonomy.”¹⁴⁸

The Zionists did not relinquish their highest vision—Jewish national autonomy in an egalitarian Great Lithuania. In Zionist eyes it was the new geopolitical situation that forced the Taryba formally to acquiesce, almost in the surface, to the new conditions. It accepted a larger Lithuania than planned and incorporated Belarusian representatives (nine in all—six from Vilnius and three from Grodno); it also spoke of abandoning the idea of an ethnonational hierarchical political system.¹⁴⁹ However, the latter was merely words because the formally declared ethnoegalitarian program clearly made no practical difference to the Taryba's ethnopolitical program.

As a result, Jewish representatives joined the Taryba. According to their expectations as presented at the Zionist conference and transmitted to Berlin, seven Jewish representatives were supposed to enter the Taryba, four from Vilnius and three from the provinces.¹⁵⁰ In fact, only three joined: two Zionists (Rosenboim and Wygodzki) and one Folkist/Orthodox (Rachmilewitz).¹⁵¹ "Why did I join the Taryba?" asked Wygodzki shortly after the Zionist conference. He explained that circumstances forced the Jewish representatives to join. The other options were worse: the Germans were pulling out and there was clear danger of a power vacuum, which would lead to anarchy. The old Russian order was gone forever; Poland, because of its antisemitic policy, was out of question; the Soviet experiment boded ill and made the Russian orientation unwanted for those who rejected the soviet order in light of the gathering menace of a Soviet invasion. Neutralism was impossible under the present circumstances. The Taryba was changing, co-opting Belarusians and democrats, and it left room for a wide range of activities leading to the realization of autonomy.¹⁵²

However, among the youth sympathy for the Left increased.¹⁵³ In October 1918 the Bund clarified its position on the Soviets and on a possible Bolshevik revolution, as well as on the workers' council that was formed in Vilnius with the German revolution and the collapse of the German regime.¹⁵⁴ The Bund stated plainly, "In Lithuania there is no Revolution," phrasing the statement in a way that did not sound antirevolutionary; it also asserted that in the "workers' council" a "balanced position" between right and left was needed, and would be played by the Bund. On the one hand, the Vilnius Bund leaders rejected any initiative on the part of the workers' council to take power by force.¹⁵⁵ On the other hand they rejected the Taryba and any political cooperation that went with it.¹⁵⁶ The Bund openly demanded cultural autonomy, seeing in the *Kehilleh* the main organ to implement it.¹⁵⁷

However, the influence of communism on the Bund members increased at the very end of 1918.¹⁵⁸ Then, the Bund sounded a distinctly pro-Soviet note. It did so together with the LSDP and the SD Party of Lithuania and Belarus, heartened by the promise augured by 1919, the Soviet occupation of the city, and its incorporation into the Lithuanian-Belarusian Soviet order.¹⁵⁹ The new soviet order altered again the circumstances. The main arena of the struggle to define which Lithuania moved away from Vilnius.

Conclusion

The Jewish vision of Lithuania was based on two assumptions: first, that the Jews as an integral part of society were legitimately entitled to express their own vision of the future state. Accordingly, most of the political figures active in the “Jewish street” in Lithuania during 1915–1918 indicated their preference for national autonomy within the framework of a federal democratic Russia. Democratic Russia was understood as a democratic country reorganized according to the principle of national self-determination that includes the right to use one’s own language and to develop one’s own national culture in a political structure ethnically egalitarian. These aims did not need full sovereignty but only internal sovereignty that was seen as more important than sovereignty in the international sense. Why was it so? The answer lies, on the one hand, in the desire to maintain the unity of the millions of Jews in a multiethnic, democratic, and egalitarian huge Russia. On the other hand, they regarded the Lithuanian territory as not economically viable, too small, too weak, and too underdeveloped in an unfavorable geopolitical constellation in the middle of three powerful neighbors (Russia, Germany, and Poland). They even interpreted the Jewish economic interest as linked to Russia and not to Germany or Poland.

If not a federal democratic Russia, they expressed their support for a Greater Lithuania in order to maintain the unity of the *Litvak* Jewry on the one hand, and in order to avoid the construction of a state with one ethnic majority and one salient ethnic minority, the Jews, on the other hand. The vision of most Jewish parties was that of a nationalities state, in the belief that some kind of coalition of minorities that compelled reciprocal accommodation was the best choice. The nightmare was a nationalist state constructed along nationalizing lines and ethnic hierarchy that treated its Jewish minority with disdain and hostility.

The second assumption was that the Jews, as an integral part of society, were entitled to equality on all levels of societal life. In a multiethnic state the autonomist program in its different versions (personal or cultural) was instrumental in the demand for a fair distribution of the state's resources. It was an option that could be interpreted as authorization to receive a share of the available resources in order to advance the social mobility of such a minority group. Such ethnoegalitarian sharing of the state's resources would admit Jews to the corridors of power.

None of the above-mentioned organizations and ideologies based its demands on universal messages, but called for symbolic recognition of Jewish culture, which had been marginalized by the central government. It demanded a more equitable distribution of power, but also formal acceptance of the Jews as an ethnic group like other ethnic groups in the state, and of their culture as equal to that of others. For the Jewish intelligentsia, therefore, autonomistic claims were an instrument to challenge the hegemonic culture. In the context of the liberalization and democratization of the state, the Jewish intelligentsia demanded recognition as a legitimate group (equal to the Lithuanian, Belarusian, Polish, German, or Russian intelligentsia), and Jewish culture as equivalent to the Lithuanian culture and other ethnonational cultures present in the public sphere. Through their program, the Jewish intelligentsia desired to abolish the ascendancy of a Lithuanian hegemonic culture, and to obtain not only formal, but also symbolic, and above all concrete and tangible equality.

Separation of Russia in a full sovereign ethnonational Lithuanian nationalizing state was seen as frightful choice. It was during the last part of 1917 and during 1918 that a change had occurred. The Lithuanian politics, the German dominance, and at the same time the impossibility of relying on Soviet Russia, were the main factors that provoked the abandonment of the federalist option among Zionists and Folkists. When the political steps of the Taryba were interpreted as going toward an ethnically egalitarian state, the Zionists and Folkists accepted the idea of a fully sovereign Lithuanian state that would accommodate its minorities in an egalitarian way.

NOTES

- 1 D. L. Gold, "Yiddish Linguistics and Jewish Liturgical Boundaries as Determinants of Non-Jewish Political Boundaries? Shimshn Royznboym and the Boundaries of Interbellum Lithuania," *Jewish Language Review* 2, 1982, pp. 60–61. Gold cites Ch. Shapiro, "Of Poland, the Baltic States & the Jews, Some Personal Footnotes to

- History,” *The Jewish Observer* 7, no. 10, 1971, p. 19. Both sources use the transliteration “Yaffe” instead of the better known “Joffe” used here.
- 2 See Y. Leschinski, *Dos yidishe folk in tzifern* (Berlin: Klal Farlag, 1922), pp. 54–58, 60, and appendix. For statistics on the Jewish population in Vilnius and in the Vilnius governorate in that period see J. Wolkonowski, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Wilnie i na Wileńszczyźnie 1919–1939* (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 1969), pp. 30–37.
 - 3 M. Mintz, “Leumiut Yehudit ve-Leumiut shle miutim akherim,” *Leumiut vePolitika, Perspektivot Khadashot*, ed. J. Reinharz, G. Shimoni, and Y. Salmon (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1996), p. 201.
 - 4 Dubnow explained his outlook in a number of essays published between 1897 and 1907 in *Voskhod*. In 1907 the essays were compiled systematically into a book and published in Russian: S. M. Dubnow, *Pisma o starom i novom evreistve 1897–1907* (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia pol’za, 1907). Renée Poznanski translated the essays into French (Dubnow, *Lettres*), adding a preface and notes, and compared the essays originally published with the later versions in the 1907 book. Given the scholarly apparatus of that book, I refer to the French version. S. Dubnow, *Lettres sur le judaïsme ancien et nouveau* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1989), pp. 199–201.
 - 5 This idea fits into the broader category of ideologies known as “consociationalism,” which aims to combine democracy and national pluralism. See A. Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977); J. G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), pp. 77–78, 135–142. See also A. D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983), pp. 442–446; S. Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1995), pp. 6–14.
 - 6 M. Mintz, “Leumiut yehudit ve-leumiut shel miyutim aherim,” pp. 201–224.
 - 7 Y. Frankel, *Nevuah ve-Politika, Sotzializm, leumiut veYehudei Rusia 1862–1917* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1989), pp. 245–61; Y. Peled, *Otonomia tarbutit u-ma'avak maamadi* (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibbutz Ha-meuhad, 1997), pp. 60–61.
 - 8 J. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews and the Politics of Nationality, the Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in Late Imperial Russia, 1892–1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 123; M. Mishkinsky, “Regional Factors in the Formation of the Jewish Labor Movement in Czarist Russia, *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Sciences* 14, 1969, pp. 35–36.
 - 9 For example, Uriah Katsenelbogen (1885–1980) who was deeply engaged in a project of bringing the Lithuanian culture to the Jews, in this way making them sensitive to the LSDP claims.
 - 10 L. Sabaliūnas, *Lithuanian Social Democracy in Perspective, 1893–1914* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 27, 52–53, 102–103; J. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews and Politics of Nationality*, pp. 87–88, 96, 112–113.
 - 11 In fact, all of them, except for the S.S. or “Territorialists” before 1911, and to a certain extent the Vinaver’s People’s Group. For a general description of autonomism see O. Janowsky, *The Jews and Minority Rights (1898–1919)* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), pp. 68–130.
 - 12 Zhitlovsky’s influence was evident here. See Y. Shichor, *Si’at “voztrozhdeniye,” itpatchutah ha-idiologit veva irgunit*, M. A. thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1970; J. Frankel, *Nevuah*, pp. 138–140; M. Mintz, *Ber Borokhov, ha ma’agal ha rishon (1900–*

- 1906) (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 1976), pp. 318–327; A. Greenbaum, *Tenuat ha-tehiyah “Vozrozhdeniye” u-miflegat ha-poalim ha-yehudit sotzialistit, mivhar ktavim* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Dinur, 1988), pp. X–XV; M. Mintz, “Shalosh teudot mi-yemei pulmus ‘Vozrozhdeniye’ erev veidat poltava shel miflegat ha-poalim ha-yehudit ha-sotzial demokratit poalei tzion,” *Ha-Tziyonut* 5, 1978, pp. 310–334.
- 13 Y. Gruenbaum, “Mi-varsha ad helsingfors,” *Katzir, Kovetz le-korot ha-tenuah ha-tzionit be-rusia* 1, 1964, pp. 21–42; A. R. Tzentsiper, “Veidot artziyot shel tzionei rusia,” *Katzir, Kovetz le-korot ha-tenuah ha-tzionit be-rusia* 1, 1964, pp. 76–103; Y. Maor, *Ha-tenuah ha-tzionit be-rusia* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985), pp. 315–320; A. Orbach, “Zionism and the Russian Revolution of 1905: The Commitment to Participate in Domestic Political Life,” *Bar-Ilan*, 24–25, 1989, pp. 7–23; M. Mintz, “Work for the Land of Israel and ‘Work for the Present,’ A concept of Unity, a Reality of Contradiction,” *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. J. Reinharz and A. Shapira (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 161–170.
- 14 On this issue see Zechlin’s important work, E. Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969).
- 15 A great deal has been published about the Committee for the East. See especially M. Bodenheimer, *Prelude to Israel*, ed. by H. H. Bodenheimer, translated by I. Cohen (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1963); M. Bodenheimer, “The Story of the Hindenburg Declaration,” *Herzl Yearbook* 2, 1959, pp. 56–77. See also E. Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden*, pp. 126–138; Z. Szajkowski, “The Komitee für den Osten and Zionism,” *Herzl Yearbook* 7, 1971, pp. 199–240; J. Ticker, “Max I. Bodenheimer: Advocate of Progerman Zionism at the Beginning of World War I,” *Jewish Social Studies* 43, 1981, pp. 11–30; J. Reinherz, ed., *Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus, 1882-1933* (Tübingen, 1981), pp. 148–151; S. Aschheim, “Eastern Jews, German Jews and Germany’s Ostpolitik in the First World War,” *Leo Bacck Institute Year Book* 28, 1983, pp. 355–365; I. Friedman, *Germany, Turkey, Zionism, 1897–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 231–236; Y. Weiss, *Etniut ve-ezrahut* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2000), pp. 35–38.
- 16 Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2003), pp. 43–45.
- 17 T. Szabad, “Iberzicht,” *Vilner Zamelbuch* 2, 1918, pp. 22–23.
- 18 Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* pp. 50–51.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 The leaflet containing the four versions was published in P. Klimas, *Dienoraštis, 1915.XII.1-1919.I.19* (Chicago: A. Mackaus knygu leidimo fondas, 1988), pp. 328–331.
- 21 Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* pp. 50–51.
- 22 T. Szabad, “Iberzicht,” pp. 22–23.
- 23 “Citizens,” Yiddish Scientific Institute, New York, (YIVO), RG 10, Box 29, Folder 386.
- 24 Szabad mentioned only one proclamation, that of 1915 December. T. Szabad, “Iberzicht,” pp. 22–23.
- 25 See, for example, Y. Wigodski, *In shturm, zikhroynes fun di okupatzie tzaytn* (Vilnius: Kletzkin, 1926), pp. 43–45, 100–103; *Shul Pinkos, finf yorn arbet fun tzentralen bildungs komitet, 1919–1924* (Vilnius: Tz.b.k., 1924), pp. 26–26; I. Klausner, *Vilna, Yerushalim de-Lita, dorot aharonim, 1881–1939* (Bet lokhamei ha-getatot: Bet lokhamei ha-getatot and ha-kibbutz ha-meuhad, 1983), pp. 117–119.

- 26 T. Szabad, "Iberzicht," pp. 22–23.
- 27 B. Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," *Pinkos far der geshikhte fun Vilne in di yorn fun milkhome un okupatzie*, ed. Zalman Reizen, Avrom Virshuvski, Shmul-Leyb Tzitron, and Tzemakh Szabad (Vilnius: B. Tsionsohn, 1922), p. 689.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid., p. 690.
- 30 Ibid., p. 691.
- 31 Ibid., p. 692.
- 32 Ibid., pp. 692–693.
- 33 T. Szabad, "Iberzicht," p. 22.
- 34 B. Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," pp. 692–693.
- 35 *Lietuvos Valstybės Tarybos protokolai, 1917–1918*, eds. R. Lopata and A. Eidintas (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1991), p. 38. Cited with minor changes from Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 58.
- 36 Ibid., p. 43.
- 37 P. Klimas, *Iš mano atsiminimų* (Vilnius: Lietuvos enciklopedijų redakcija, 1990), p. 131, according to J. Tauber, "No Allies: The Lithuanian Taryba and the National Minorities 1916–1918," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 38, no. 4, 2007, p. 438.
- 38 The Zionists were absent when the resolutions were formulated. Y. Broydes, *Vilna ha-yehudit ve-askaneha* (Tel Aviv: Histadrut olei vilna ve-ha-galil, 1939), pp. 315–316.
- 39 "Deklaration" YIVO, RG 29, Box 14, Folder 293. See also, W. Sukiennicki, *East Central Europe during World War I, From Foreign Domination to National Independence* (Boulder, Co: East European Monographs and Columbian University Press, 1984), pp. 373–374.
- 40 "We must go back a bit far in that our input," Central Zionist Archives (Jerusalem)(CZA), Z3/131; see also W. Sukiennicki, *East Central Europe during World War I*, pp. 373–374.
- 41 Y. Broydes, *Vilna ha-yehudit*, p. 316.
- 42 "Deklaration."
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 A. Smetona, *Die litauische Frage* (Berlin: Das neue Litauen, 1917). The statement was made on 17 November in Berlin and was broadly known to the foremost figures in leading Jewish circles in Berlin and among Vilnius Zionists.
- 46 B. Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," p. 697.
- 47 Ibid., p. 698.
- 48 "Lithuanian Jerusalem is in danger," Lietuvos Mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių bibliotekos Rankraščių skyrius (Manuscript Department of the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences) (LMAVB RS), F. 255, b. 929.
- 49 "Deliberation on the Jews in the Borderlands, Warsaw," 14 January 1918, LMAVB RS, F. 79, b. 830.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 B. Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," p. 698.

- 56 Ibid.
- 57 "Lithuanian Jerusalem is in danger," l. 51a.
- 58 B. Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," pp. 698–699.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Struck to Arthur Hantke, 29.9.1918, CZA, Z3/134. See also, T. Balshan, "Maavakam shel yehudei lita al zekhuyotehem ha-leumiyot 1917–1918," *Shvut* 10, 1984, p. 70. Yaakov Wigodski was imprisoned because his obstinate opposition to German policy. Y. Wigodski, *In shturm*, pp. 120–127.
- 61 "Nokh haYishev ha das fun der algemeiner fareinigter mitglieder farzamlung fun di vilner organizatsie fun 'Bund' un der SD partei in Lite," YIVO, RG 10, Box 29, Folder 293.
- 62 Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* pp. 60–61.
- 63 Ibid., pp. 64–65.
- 64 L. Rosenberg, *Die Juden in Litauen. Geschichte, Bevölkerung und Wirtschaft, Politische Forderungen* (Berlin and Munich: Verlag der Neuen Jüdischen Verlag, 1918), p. 38; A. Smetona, *Die litauische Frage*, p. 31; "Zur Lage in Litauen," *Jüdische Rundschau*, 16 August 1918, p. 253. For the position of the Taryba on the national minorities see J. Tauber, "No Allies," p. 437.
- 65 "The future of Lithuania and its relations with its neighbors," Annenberg Rare manuscript collection, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA (Van Pelt UPENN), Šaulys collection, Folder 18.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 P. Klimas, *Le développement de l'état Lituanien à partir de l'année 1915 jusqu' la à formation du Gouvernement provisoire au mois de novembre 1918* (Paris: J. Langlois, 1919), p. 87; W. Sukiennicki, *East Central Europe during World War I*, p. 375.
- 68 Smetona's statement cited by Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 59.
- 69 "Di Forshteyershaft fun di minderhaytn in Litvishn landrat," *Letzte Naves*, 10 March 1917.
- 70 "Di Melukhe Shprakh far Lite," *Letzte Naves*, 18 October 1917.
- 71 See, for example, J. Tauber, "No Allies," pp. 436–437.
- 72 Ibid., p. 436.
- 73 T. Szabad, "Iberzikht," p. 23.
- 74 Ibid., pp. 23–24.
- 75 G. Ilgūnas, *Steponas Kairys* (Vilnius: Vaga, 2002); J. Aničas, *Jonas Vileišis, 1872–1942* (Vilnius: Alma Littera, 1995).
- 76 T. Szabad, "Iberzikht," pp. 23–24.
- 77 Arthur Hantke to the *Oberost* administration, 26 October 1917, CZA, Z3/172.
- 78 T. Balshan, "Maavakam shel yehudei lita al zekhuyotehem ha-leumiyot 1917–1918," p. 70.
- 79 Arthur Hantke to the *Oberost* administration.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 A. Stražas, "Die Tätigkeit des Dezernats für jüdische Angelegenheiten in der deutschen Militärverwaltung Ober Ost," *The Russian Baltic Provinces between the 1905/1917 Revolutions*, ed. A. Ezergilis and G. von Pistohlkors (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1982), pp. 315–330.
- 82 Struck's memorandum on his meetings sent to Hantke, 26 December 1917, CZA, Z3/131.

- 83 Gayl to Hantke, 28 December 1917, CZA, Z3/131.
- 84 "Der Tsentral Komitet," p. 230.
- 85 "Fun'm tzienistishn miting," *Letzte Naves*, 10 October 1917.
- 86 Struck to Hantke, 26 December 1917, CZA Z3/131. According to Struck, the referent for Jewish issues in the *Oberost* administration, with Rubinstein three representatives were spoken of (Rubinstein, Rosenboim, and Rachmilewitz) out of twenty-five (12%). All other sources mention two representatives. Three representatives reflect quite accurately the percentage of the Jews in the population (14.63). L. Rosenberg, *Die Juden in Litauen*, p. 18. It is possible that this first agreement led Mathias Erzberg to maintain that the Jews refused to receive representation according to their percentage in the population. See Erzberg to EAC, 11 January 1918, CZA, Z3/21.
- 87 Hantke to Verwaltung *Oberost*, 26 October 1917, CZA, Z3/131.
- 88 Protocol, 4 February 1918, CZA, Z3/207.
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 Struck to Hantke.
- 91 See Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* pp. 61–62. Here the translation is mine, according to the signed copy of the document found in YIVO, RG 29, Box 29, Folder 385.
- 92 P. Klimas, *Dienoraštis*, p. 215 (entry from 15 January 1918).
- 93 "To his Highness the Lord Chief of Militerverwaltung Lithuania," 29 October 1917, YIVO, RG 10, Box 2-29, Folder 377.
- 94 T. Szabad, "Iberzikht," p. 23; "Fun'm Tzienistishn miting," *Letzte Naves*, October 16 1917.
- 95 The concept of societal language, as defined by Will Kymlicka, refers to the value of a language recognized by the state and used in a wide range of state institutions, such as schools, the legal system, the economy and government. Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 25–27, 53.
- 96 First and Second protocol, YIVO, RG 29, Box 14, Folder 304.
- 97 "The general Jewish People's Party in Lithuania," CZA, Z3/131.
- 98 P. Klimas, *Dienoraštis*, p. 215; Letter to Salinger 2 January 1918, CZA, Z3/132. For the Folkists see: "The general Jewish People's Party in Lithuania," CZA, Z3/131.
- 99 "The general Jewish People's Party in Lithuania," CZA, Z3/131; B. Halpern "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," p. 699.
- 100 Protocol, 4 February 1918, CZA, Z3/207.
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 M. Shalit, "Di Tzioninzirung fun yidishn lebn," pp. 9–11.
- 105 The question of orientation is connected to the question of the measure of autonomy or independence. How much sovereignty should be granted? All the political groups understood that in the existing geopolitical conditions some concessions were needed regarding the features of sovereignty.
- 106 See above and Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* pp. 58–59; J. Tauber, "No Allies," pp. 435–436.
- 107 Rosenboim to Paul Nathan, 21 February 1918, CZA, Z3/207.

- 108 Leaflet from May 1917 ("Proletarians of all countries, unite"), YIVO, RG 10, Box 29, Folder 293.
- 109 B. Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," p. 698.
- 110 "Nokh haYishev ha das fun der algemeiner fareinigter mitglieder farzamlung fun di vilner organizatsie fun 'Bund' un der SD partei in Lite," YIVO, RG 10, Box 29, Folder 293.
- 111 B. Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," p. 693.
- 112 See, for example, J. Wigodski, *In Shturm*, pp. 120–127.
- 113 Protocol from 8 July 1918, CZA, A126/40/2.
- 114 On the despoliation policy of the German occupation regime in Lithuania see F. Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967), pp. 273–279, 436–437, 456–472, 598–608; J. Matthäus, *German Judenpolitik in Lithuania during the First World War* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1962), pp. 165–166; V. G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front. Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 66–68, 77, 93, and passim. In this context see I. V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction, Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 226–262.
- 115 Simon Rosenboim to Paul Nathan, 21 February 1918, CZA, Z3/207.
- 116 Note by Klee dated 13 January 1918, CZA, Z3/13 and a second note by Klee, 16 January 1918, CZA, Z3/377.
- 117 In such a context see A. Stražas, "Die Litauische Landesrat als Instrument des deutschen Ostpolitik 1917–1918," pp. 341–363; J. Tauber, "Stubborn Collaborators," pp. 194–209.
- 118 Protocol of the meeting of the Zionist organization in Kaunas held on 5 October 1919, CZA F/46/1.
- 119 According to Zur Judenfrage in Litauen, 1 May 1918, CZA, L6/108.
- 120 Ibid.
- 121 Richard Lichtheim to Kurt Blumenfeld, 2 February 1918, CZA, Z3/728.
- 122 On this declaration see E. Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden*, pp. 235–237; T. Balshan, "Maavakam shel yehudei lita al zekhuyotehem ha-leumiyot 1917–1918," pp. 77–79.
- 123 "A statement of the Jewish problem in Lithuania," pp. 434–435.
- 124 S [Moyshe Shalit], "Vegn der Tzukunft fun di Litvishe Yidn," pp. 8–9.
- 125 T. Balshan, "Maavakam shel yehudei lita al zekhuyotehem ha-leumiyot 1917–1918," pp. 79–80; Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 69.
- 126 Rosenboim to Nathan, 6 May 1918, CZA, Z3/133.
- 127 Ibid.
- 128 Ibid.
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- 140 On the conference see E. Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), p. 219; T. Balshan, “Maavakam shel yehudei lita al zekhuyotehem ha-leumiyot 1917–1918,” p. 81; Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 76; E. Bendikaitė, *Sionistinis sąjūdis Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2006), pp. 66–68. See also in this volume E. Bendikaitė, “The Lithuanian Zionist Conference, Vilnius, December 5–8, 1918.”
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- 142 The speech of the lawyer, Mr. S. Rosenboim at the Zionist Conference at Vilnius, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 929, l. 31a; The First National Conference of the Zionists of Lithuania, 14 December 1918, CZA L/114. For more on Rosenboim’s speech see Bendikaitė, *Sionistinis sąjūdis Lietuvoje*, pp. 67–68.
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- 155 “Arbeterrat,” *Unzer shtime*, 1 (5 December 1918), p. 1. See also LMAVB RS, F. 255, b. 929, l. 28a.
- 156 Report of Mr. Rosenboim, a lawyer from Vilnius on Lithuania, CZA, Z3/135.
- 157 E. Y. Goldshmidt, “Di yidishe prese in Vilne,” pp. 590–592.
- 158 Shmul Agurski, *Der vidisher arbeter in der komunistisher bavegung (1917–1921)* (Minsk: Melukhe Farlag fun Vaisrusland, 1925), pp. 72–73.
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THE ZIONIST PRIORITIES IN THE STRUGGLE FOR LITE, 1916–1918

EGLĖ BENDIKAITĖ

The viewpoint that the Lithuanian Jewish community should not be considered an indivisible unit with an unchangeable agenda is slowly taking root in Lithuanian historiography. Lithuanian historians notice often that the changing geopolitical and socio-economic situation corrected the attitudes and actions of various Jewish political movements. On the other hand, according to some opinions, the influence of Zionists is overemphasized, particularly in the period of building the national Lithuanian state after World War I, while the role and influence of other political movements, above all those that did not have any more successors after the Holocaust (the Bund, the Folkists, the Orthodox), is mistakenly marginalized.¹

The works of Jewish and Lithuanian researchers present two parallel viewpoints regarding the politics of Jews in the genesis of Lithuanian statehood. One notes the undoubtedly pro-Lithuanian attitude of Jews, their loyalty, and unrecognized contribution to restoring the independent Lithuanian state in the early decades of the twentieth century.² The other notes that Jews were not interested in the Lithuanian national movement or the independent Lithuanian state, but were exclusively focused on their own interests and the position of their more powerful neighbors.³ It is also noted in historiography that the political cooperation of Lithuanians and Jews after World War I was mutually advantageous, based on political calculation, which was provoked by anti-Polish views of both cooperating sides. Several individual researchers widely reveal the importance of inner and outer factors, which influenced the decisions and motivation of Lithuanian Jews against the general background of the politics of that period.⁴ These works are imperative in that they show the influence of Zionists on the formation of Lithuanian-Jewish alliance and are based on the analysis of reports on their political social work and correspondence in

the zone of German military administration during World War I (i.e., the sources that were relevant for the current research as well).

Before the beginning of World War I, the leaders of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) not only formulated the basic guidelines of putting the Zionist ideals and the Basel program⁵ into perspective, but also approved of the “here and now” principle of activity. This principle provided for a transition from passive observance to active struggle for the political, civic, and national rights and interests of Jews living in the diaspora, by combining a vision of the future with the solution of concrete urgent tasks by way of compromise.⁶

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Zionists as a political movement were still under formation, it was at that time they had to establish their relationship with the newly arising factors—the Lithuanian, Polish, and Belarusian national movements, and the new national states rising from the ruins of the Russian empire in the late 1910s. The Zionists did not intend to stay in the role as observers, and their political position was not stagnant. Lithuanian Zionists, whose solutions for the most part depended on the position of the Zionist leaders in the central headquarters in Berlin, Hague, or Copenhagen, discussed various future prospects of so-called Lite (Jewish Lithuania) and the existence of Jews in it, while looking for allies in achieving their national interests and political aims. On the other hand, the strategy of Lithuanian Zionists was concentrated in the hands of several people and often depended on their personal views and fixed priorities.

“One for All”

World War I, which broke out in August 1914, and Turkey joining the war made the leaders of the WZO and its committees in separate countries revise their political course while seeking to put the basic Zionist goal into perspective, and take a respective position with regard to the countries involved in the war. In the early war years, the leadership of the WZO emphasized a strictly neutral position. In addition to the Central Zionist Bureau of the WZO, which transferred from Cologne to Berlin in 1911 and operated in the territory of a country in war, a new analogous bureau was established farther from the front line in Copenhagen, and the mission of the National Fund was transferred to Hague.⁷

At the outbreak of war, the ranks of Lithuanian Zionists considerably shrunk. Because of the intensified persecutions of the czarist regime, part

of the activists fled to Germany before the beginning of the war, while others retreated into the depths of the empire by the order of the Russian military administration. Here they joined a group of Russian Zionists concentrated in Petrograd and actively contributed to the publishing of the Zionist press.⁸ With regard to the leaders of the prewar generation, Vilnius was still home to Jakub Wygodzki (who soon fell into disfavor of the Germans and spent the war years in prisons of war), Josef Regensburg (who had briefly become the chairman of the central committee of the Lithuanian Zionist Organization in Vilnius immediately after World War I, and later was an active figure of the Zionist movement in Poland), Yitshak Rubinshtein (the Vilnius Rabbi), Moses de Shalit, Israel Nisan Kark (who later became the leader of the religious Zionists “Mizrachi” in Lithuania), Abraham Virshubski, and the well-known Zionist Shimshon Rosenboim (who arrived from Minsk at the end of 1915, when Vilnius was already under German occupation).⁹ The Lithuanian Zionist Organization as an independent subject did not exist in the country, and did not perform any purposeful well-coordinated activity. The relationship between its center in Vilnius and the small groups that existed in the province was very complicated because the links had been cut and infrastructures destroyed during the war. The entire activity was concentrated in the circle of its most active members, led by Rosenboim. He explained his influence on the Jewish community by objective circumstances, that is, the retreat from Lithuania of expert Zionists, whose political and social influence on the Jewish community was very strong, his authority of a former Duma deputy, and his merits as a barrister in serving the remaining local Jewish community and Jewish refugees.¹⁰ He also emphasized that the other members of the Zionist movement in Vilnius had enough good will, but lacked energy, initiative, and influence. The young Zionists who propagated specific Zionist activity, deserved respect “for their vital energy and sincere faith,” but because of their lack of experience their activity did not produce expected results.¹¹ Rosenboim’s personal achievements contributed to increasing the influence of Zionism, and his engagement in solving the common Jewish problems guaranteed a solid position and support for this movement on the “Jewish street.” Quite often the Zionists would manage to present their position as the standpoint of the entire Jewish community.

The correspondence of the WZO shows that Rosenboim’s opinion and influence on the Jewish community was highly esteemed. Drs. Arthur Hantke and Paul Nathan, the leaders of the Zionist movement in Germany and intermediaries between the Zionist groups operating in the *Oberost*

territory and the leadership of the WZO, who had in their hands the larger part of the inner correspondence of the WZO coordinating the plans of action between Berlin and Vilnius, considered Rosenboim the most important contact person, the most reliable partner, and executor of the Zionist policy in Lithuania. Rosenboim was addressed regarding various political, social, and cultural issues, and issues related to exclusively Zionist welfare activity—support for Palestine.¹² On the other hand, though taking into account the weakness of the Zionist forces in the occupied zone and the importance of personal relations, attempts were made to maintain direct contact by regularly inviting Rosenboim to Berlin and Copenhagen, and by sending their agents to Vilnius. The leaders of the WZO claimed they knew the best course of Zionist politics and could guarantee its continuity. They did not always exactly know the political moods and position on certain issues of the local leaders in Lithuania. However, the meetings of Hantke, Nathan, Lichtheim, and others associated with the highest officials and party leaders of the German Reich discussing the position of the Lithuanian Jews show that their role was much more important than that of an observer, adviser, or informant. The politics of the Lithuanian Zionists was for the most part formed or at least coordinated in Berlin.¹³

“The First Victim of War Is the Truth”¹⁴

The WZO was global, thus its branches located in the territories of both sides engaged in the war could not have a unanimous opinion regarding the program of further actions. It was risky to support one of the sides at the beginning of the war, as the winner was not clear, and one could easily find oneself on the losing side.

The changing events in the front line had direct influence on the determination of the Lithuanian Zionists as to which side they should support. Together with community leaders and social figures who had remained in the country after the mass deportations into the depths of Russia from March through May 1915, the Zionists were focused on the problems of mutual aid, social issues, often issues of physical survival, and the struggle against the role of an enemy informer and ally incriminating to the Jews through the propaganda of the changing administrations.¹⁵ In historiography an opinion prevails that Jews regarded the German occupation as a lesser evil, and because of their professional activity and language skills became successful intermediaries between the Germans and other social groups in the country.¹⁶

The favorable attitude of Jews toward the German military administration was caused by the policy of equal rights principle, which was called a “magical trick” suddenly allowing “Jews to stop feeling like pariahs,” and rather “to launch a vigorous struggle for their political, civic, and national rights.” According to the report on the Jewish situation in Lithuania, which reached the Central Zionist Bureau in Berlin in 1916, the highest officials of the occupational administration were not philosemites (those knew little about the Jewish national aspirations), but treated representatives of various nations as equals. Neither in the front zone nor the territory occupied by enemies did Jews have to be afraid of pogroms or be “publicly whipped or declared spies and informers without any grounds, be hanged without court, or sent to Siberia.”¹⁷ This was Jewish experience for the last 150 years, when the subjects of the Russian empire, and as the “masters of the country” were retreating, the situation got even worse.¹⁸ The catastrophic economic situation, unemployment, and famine during World War I were outbalanced by the possibilities of quite intense cultural and educational activity and the absolute freedom of political thought. The changed situation and a fairly liberal attitude of the *Oberost* administration made the Jews anxious, as at each step they encountered opposition that protected the former “understanding of equality.” “Germans should be very cautious in seeking to guarantee equal rights for all national groups, as any equality with regard to Jews is considered as our protection [Jews] and can provoke even stronger hostility toward Jews.”¹⁹ Proportional representation of the interests of the Jewish community in various commissions and municipal organs, and eight out of twenty-one seats foreseen in the Vilnius City Council that planned to be elected despite the harsh opposition of the Poles, increased the favorable attitude of Jews toward the German military administration.

The pro-German political line of the Vilnius Zionists, which treated the Germans as liberators from the oppressive politics of Czarist Russia rather than aggressors, and eulogies to the freedom of the cultural and political life of Jews, which gave hope for a new status of Jews in their living territory—particularly at the beginning of the war—reflected in the Zionist reports, would be logical and understandable. However, when the fact became clear that the Lithuanian Zionists maintained very close contact with representatives of the occupational power, it was still unsure whether these were the actual views of the Zionists or just an outcome of German censorship and propaganda.

In January 1916, postal communication between the Vilnius Zionists and the Central Zionist Bureau in Berlin was renewed. Correspondence,

which reached Berlin in one day, was sent by the channels of the German military administration. Rosenboim used the services of the secretariat of the German administration, where his letters were rewritten in German bureaucratic style, printed out, and sent to the addressee. Rosenboim signed the letters under the pseudonym of Nomi, which may have been chosen upon advice from German officials. The pseudonym gave him protection from being identified while openly sticking to his pro-German orientation, or as a whole allowed him to conceal his actual political views for fear of informers. His reports were addressed to an influential international organization that operated in Germany, thus they could be of interest above all to other Jewish political forces in Lithuania and Germany, and also to other national groups (e.g., Poles). The Zionist leaders in the Central Bureau in Berlin knew about this cover. Although accepting the rules of the game and using the same code—pseudonym Nomi—they did not forget about Rosenboim's subtle situation in Lithuania. Thus, with the aim of finding out or checking if that cover was not pressure in itself or propaganda initiated by Germans who sought to encourage the society's favorable attitude to the occupational power, they asked Rosenboim to confirm that the information contained in the reports signed under the pseudonym was true to reality, correct, and coincided with his own convictions.²⁰ However, it seems that until the latter half of 1917, Rosenboim's pro-German orientation should not be doubted.

The Zionists' Political Expectations

Different social groups advanced different political aims, which were influenced not only by their self-determination, but also by the general geopolitical situation in Europe. One of the basic questions, which caused clashes of the views and aims of various political groups, was the future political status of Lithuania and visions of its territory. The Zionists in this situation saw a historical chance to correct the Jewish situation in the country not only by ensuring their political, civic, and national rights in return for their political support for Lithuanians, but also to become law-makers and executors of law in the formation of the country's administration together with other national groups.

In the Zionist discussions of the issue of political allies, the country's historically formed society was represented as a mosaic of four basic elements: Belarusians, Lithuanians, Jews, and Poles. The Zionists saw Poles as people of high culture, having a strong national identity and un-

grounded visions to rule the country. “Their aims of gravitation are not related only with Congressional Poland; they regard themselves and all of Lithuania as part of Poland, which is the source of all their political aspirations, and they wish to rule the country by themselves, even though being aware that they cannot have absolute power in Lithuania, which they have in Poland.”²¹ The Zionists considered the Lithuanian Jews as autochthons who lived in Lithuania for more than a century in well-organized communities, reached a high level of culture and a well-developed and consciously realized sense of national identity differing from the nationalism of other surrounding nations in its peaceful rhetoric and absence of expressions of aggressive belligerence. The Jews were presented as an attractive ally. Although representing 15 percent of the population, they were not merely a national minority against one solid majority, but equal partners to each of the country’s national groups that could not reach mutual political consensus.²² To generalize the social status of the Poles and the Jews, it was asserted that only these two groups could represent the country’s intelligentsia. The Lithuanians and the Belarusians—which together make up the majority—were peasants, almost without any intelligentsia, which could not even be compared with the Polish and Jewish intelligentsia in its quantity, quality, and a large percentage of illiterates. “The sense of national consciousness existing among the Lithuanian intelligentsia is strong, but tends to break into an angry rhetoric, ... while seeking to instill the sense of national identity in the masses and using all the energy and means available to promote the mental liberation of the masses and the consolidation of Lithuanian nationalism.”²³

In the balance of power distribution, the opposition between the Poles, on the one hand, and the Lithuanians and the Belarusians, on the other hand, was obvious due to their long-established social roles, that is, the relationship between a landlord and a peasant, still intensified by the Poles’ territorial aspirations and goals of assimilation. The relationship between the Jews and the Poles was described as hostile, even though it was not demonstrated on the Polish side as brutally as in Congressional Poland. Also, the Jews tried to underrate the manifestations of that hostility. The position of the Belarusians and particularly the Lithuanians with regard to the Jews was defined as correct and satisfactory; as the prewar political events showed, it was possible to find a rational basis for compromises and agreements on the main political questions and in forming a possible common political bloc in the future. However, let us return to the changing situation in the engaged Lithuania.

The liberal attitude of the German administration and the concessions made for the Jewish community did not last long. Germany's strategic plans with regard to Lithuania, which became distinct in 1917—while supporting the principle of the nations' right to self-determination, to promote the goal of the Lithuanians to restore the ethnographic Lithuania, thus building a political formation under their control, resistant to the influences of Russians and Poles, and favorable to Germany's interests in the East—caused anxiety for the Zionists and “corrected” the favorable attitude toward Germany's politics in the *Oberost*. Rosenboim signaled to the Central Zionist Bureau the growth of antisemitism in the spheres where it had never existed, and about the emerging distance between Lithuanians and Jews because of their varying views, which Jews alone were incapable of reducing, unless “they [Jews] rejected their most sacred inherent rights” and the *Oberost* administration changed its policy.²⁴ Rosenboim had in mind the increasing sympathies and connivance of the Germans toward the negotiators representing the Lithuanian interests, and rumors similar to blackmail that the unwillingness of the Jews to contribute to the joint political work in the country, was nothing more than the boycott of Lithuania's plans for independence.

In the summer of 1917, the president of the WZO, Otto Warburg, took steps to promote the issues of founding the organization in Vilnius and legitimizing its activity, which had been raised for some time, but got stuck due to various circumstances. The highest leadership of the *Oberost* was handed an appeal to allow the establishment of Zionist organizations, such as branches of the German Zionist organization, in the *Oberost* territory.²⁵ However, it was not until almost a year later that the organization that had been operating de facto was legitimized.

The Zionists were prompted to act by the growing Lithuanian national aspirations, goals of political independence and autocracy, and the Council elected at the September 1917 Lithuanian Conference, consisting exclusively of Lithuanian members, in which seats for candidates of national minorities were reserved. The representatives of the national minorities had to be appointed by the Council itself, the new members had to support Lithuania's independence, could not have participated in any anti-Lithuanian activity, and had to understand the Lithuanian language.²⁶

From 12 through 17 October 1917, Arthur Hantke visited Vilnius on a mission from the WZO, where he met with the local leaders of the Jewish community and needed to form an opinion about the economic, social, and cultural situation of the Jews living in the *Oberost* territory. While seeking to use his visit for the propaganda of Zionist ideas, local Zionists

held a meeting in Vilnius on 14 October, which confirmed that the hopes of the Jewish nation to have a National Home²⁷ in its historical lands did not change in the war years, and they did not stop dreaming about Palestine.²⁸ In his address to the participants of the meeting, Rosenboim stressed, “Zionism has been finally transferred to the domain of the ministry of foreign affairs rather than that of home affairs, that is, in addition to other problems, the war raised the problem of Jews in a new way, not as a separate community, but as a united nation with all its characteristic attributes. At this moment it has become a European problem, a global question that finally has to be answered.”²⁹ The basic idea of the meeting was to emphasize that during these great changes, Zionism could not remain a privilege of only a narrow circle of people, and Jews as representatives of one nation had to understand the necessity of this movement, thus granting the leadership and representatives of the WZO a moral right to act on behalf of all Jews. On 2 November 1917, Lord Arthur Balfour, the then-minister of foreign affairs of Great Britain, announced a declaration, which became one of the crucial points of reference in the history of Zionism and the Jewish people scattered all over the world. By this declaration, the Jews were granted their political rights to the historical land of their ancestors—Eretz Yisrael.³⁰ It was a great diplomatic achievement and, above all, the political triumph of the Zionists, which gave much hope for Jews in all countries. Changes that took place on the international arena increased the authority of the Zionists even more, including Lithuanian, on the “Jewish street.”

On 29 October 1917, the Zionists initiated an official memorandum to the *Oberost* authorities in Vilnius, in which they asked for permission to assemble the general congress of the *Oberost* Jews, which had to answer the question about the participation in the Council formed by the Lithuanians and prepare the conditions for the national and cultural autonomy of the Jews. However, the *Oberost* authorities did not grant such permission.³¹ Representatives of the Lithuanian Zionist organization handed several more similar memoranda to the leaders of the WZO in Berlin, who had to lead negotiations with representatives of the German authorities in the *Oberost*.³² In his letter addressed to Martin Salinger—an official of the *Oberost* chancellery in Vilnius of Jewish descent; the correspondence between Vilnius and Berlin Zionists passed through his hands—which reached Vilnius at the end of 1917, Arthur Hantke mentioned his meeting with Mathias Erzberger (the chairman of the Center Party of the German Parliament representing the interests of the lower and middle Catholic clerical class). In Erzberger’s opinion, peace negotiations with Russia

were leading up to a situation in which the inhabitants of the occupied part of Lithuania's territory would acquire the right to self-determination, the territories around Grodno and Białystok, and the southern third of the Suwałki region. But Suwałki city itself would be ceded to Poland, while the remaining territory—including Vilnius—would become the Kingdom of Lithuania. The opinion voiced at the meeting that the state structure adopted by Lithuanians at a referendum would be based on close links with the German Reich, and the Jews would be granted all rights appropriate for a national minority, made the leaders of the WZO put pressure on their party colleagues in Vilnius. They asked them to renew contacts with Lithuanian political leaders and resume negotiations, and recommend to Salinger establishing a personal contact with Antanas Smetona, who spoke favorably of the Jews at the Lithuanian delegation in Berlin.³³

Following the recommendations of the WZO, a small initiative group of Lithuanian Jews led by Rosenboim renewed contacts with the Lithuanian negotiators, and at the same time tried to convince the Belarusian negotiators to do the same. The Lithuanians promised to hold a joint meeting, but decided that before that, a separate coordinative preparatory meeting should take place. Feeling as the masters of the situation, the Lithuanians sent their sole representative to the meeting, who was not even a member of the Provisional Council. The meeting ended with the Jewish requirements and a promise to negotiate them in the near future. The continuous flow of events spun faster than expected. While the Zionist negotiators waited in Vilnius, the members of the Council signed the Act of Independence of Lithuania on 16 February 1918. The Lithuanian delegation in Berlin informed the Reichskanzler about the act, and on 23 March received a declaration signed by the Reichskanzler about the recognition of the Lithuanian state, according to the Council's declaration of 11 December 1917, which obliged Lithuania to assume part of the war's costs.³⁴

The proclaiming of Lithuania's independence without participation from representatives of national minorities disrupted the confidence in Lithuanians as political allies and put the representatives of Jewish interests in an awkward situation. According to Rosenboim, the Zionists did not have anything against the fact itself, that is, the proclamation of Lithuania's independence, but were not satisfied with autocratic politics. What was even worse, was that this autocracy was recognized by Germany, which resulted in privileging the representatives of one out of four nationalities actively operating in the country—Lithuanians. He asserted, "We have grounds for fear that others here will not like everything that

these gentlemen did. And the decisions passed by these gentlemen can be put into perspective only by pressure from the German administration... If we, Jews, oppose the ungrounded decisions of these gentlemen, it would seem as if we were Germanophobic or even worse, Bolsheviks, who are the only ones to form an opposition to the country's independence. Such a position would be extremely unfavorable to us."³⁵ However, instead of yielding to a spontaneous wish to make a harsh protest post factum, the Zionists sent a telegram to the Reichskanzler expressing gratitude to the German emperor for the recognition of the Lithuanian state and requiring that in the future Germany not negotiate with representatives of only one nationality, which did not constitute the majority of the population.³⁶

Because of the changed situation and having discussed the newly formed circumstances, the Zionists answered the repeated invitation from Lithuanian negotiators to renew negotiations from March to April 1918, as the representatives of the Council were supposedly ready to assemble a new meeting and "acknowledge the just requirements of the Jews." Lithuanians sought to legitimize the Council, claiming to adopt decisions on behalf of the country's entire population and ensuring the support of people of other nationalities for a young state. Meanwhile the Zionists sought out the sole aim in the given situation—to proportionally represent the Jewish community in the ruling organs with all the ensuing rights and responsibilities. Lithuanians stuck to their decisions, that is, offered the Jews two seats in the Council, demanded the recognition of its legitimacy in advance, and promised the support of the Council in holding the meeting of the *Oberost* Jews, but not on a universal scale sought by the Zionists.³⁷ The meeting did not bring the planned results, as they could only be achieved by concessions that both sides were not inclined to make.

Two seats in Lithuania's Provisional Council for the Zionists seemed to be an insulting disregard of the Jewish rights and a refusal to take notice of the real situation in the country. In their estimation, six or seven seats could guarantee equal rights and proportional representation corresponding to the size of the Jewish community in the country. Rosenboim assessed the negotiations with the Lithuanians in the following way, "The Lithuanian gentlemen know that it would be better for them to have more Jews in the Council, as Jews would support them not only against the Polish aspirations, but also against everyone else's aspirations. With all their energy they will support the country's independence. If the Lithuanians offer us the number of seats in the Council not satisfying our requirements, like they did for other minorities, it will mean that they are unable to distance themselves from their autocratic aspirations and seek them-

selves to be recognized as the sole ‘elected’ people of the country... If it happens, we cannot accept this.”³⁸

In the meantime, in a confidential letter to Paul Nathan, Rosenboim announced that it was not the best time for making concessions and that the Lithuanians did not have any levers to make Jews give up their requirements. “We feel strong enough, and sooner or later we are going to put our wishes into perspective, and it won’t be a tragedy if we join the Council somewhat later. Thus, we won’t have to share responsibility for the mistakes committed by responsible persons before that.”³⁹

In the spring of 1918 in Vilnius, the Jewish negotiators revisited all the possible levers that could soften the Lithuanian position. One such possibility was to stop the negotiations with Lithuanians for an unlimited period of time and concentrate attention on the consolidation of more intense contacts with the *Oberost* administration and search for common points of interest between Germany and the Jewish people in Lithuania by questioning the legitimacy of Lithuania’s Provisional Council imposed on the majority of the country’s population. The Zionists tried to return to the idea of direct negotiations with Germany, but this was not the first time. Immediately after the proclamation of Lithuania’s independence, they tried to prove that the support of the *Oberost* administration and the Reich leaders for one national group in Lithuania in holding negotiations and adopting decisions that should be applicable to the country’s entire population—without looking for a compromise—might be harmful to Germany’s political and economic interests. Disagreements among different nationalities in Lithuania were indicated as a precondition for political crisis and instability, which was bound to turn the country into an arena of constant turmoil and struggle, while Russia and Poland with their territorial claims on Lithuania could take advantage of this fact. Besides, it would obstruct the liquidation of economic consequences of war and the possibilities of emergence of a transit route between Germany and Russia.⁴⁰

Occasional accusations from certain Lithuanian political figures that Jews supposedly served foreign powers and sought intercession on the international arena while solving their inner quarrels, were ruled “no longer valid.” Moreover, they were refuted by the fact that Lithuanians not only negotiated with the same foreign political power—Germany, but also “did not disappear from this planet, ... and at the moment when the protecting hand of the German administration is withdrawn, the only things that will be left for them [Lithuanians], having no real powers and popularity, are only nice memories of the former glory and bitterness and global pain about the transience of everything in this world.”⁴¹

In October 1918, as World War I was coming to an end, the Central Bureau of the WZO announced the so-called Copenhagen Manifesto proclaiming that the Jewish people should seek the practical implementation of the idea of the Jewish National Home in Palestine. However, it was noted that it was not less important to seek the recognition of equal rights of Jews and national autonomy in the cultural, political, and social areas in all the countries of their domicile.⁴² The text of the manifesto did not contain anything new, but it was an official confirmation of the unchanging priorities of the activity of the WZO, obligatory for all branches of the organization in separate countries.

“Isn’t Vilnius a Jewish City?”⁴³

In the nineteenth century, Vilnius was one of the peripheral cities of the Russian empire, but because of various inner and outer circumstances its situation became unique. For the Jews, this city meant the center of Lite—a region with imaginary boundaries formed through centuries, the cradle of the *Litvak* culture, religion and historical tradition, and the place of formation of Jewish political movements and organizations. At the end of 1910s, Lithuanians, Poles, and Jews claimed their historical rights to the city that had become a symbol of particular importance. After 1917, in the period of five years, the Vilnius administration changed seven times. Jews were considered either as potential allies or as an undesirable element, depending on whose flag was raised over the city. The situation in Vilnius was the best barometer describing the policy toward Jews of the nations who claimed to rule the city and the future prospects of their coexistence.⁴⁴

The conflicts over the fate of Vilnius and the Vilnius region gave the Jewish political forces more possibilities to put their political visions into perspective. The times when Vilnius was the main political and financial center of Russian Zionism were already in the past, and though part of the territory of Lite was cut off by the front line, the idea of ‘Jerusalem of Lithuania’ still remained a unifying link for all *Litvaks*. Vilnius was important for the Zionists because of the Jewish community that lived there and its political orientation, that is, to “win” the sympathies of the Vilnius Jewish community meant a sure victory on the “Jewish street” in the entire country: “The city of Vilnius occupies the leading position among Lithuanian Jews. Many years since the Vilnius Jews have been setting the tone for all political and cultural issues of Lithuanian Jews. Vilnius, ‘the

Jerusalem of Lithuania,' has exceptional authority in all of Eastern Europe. Others are ready to yield to their decisions."⁴⁵

All the interested parties played the card of the Vilnius Jews. On the other hand, the Zionists clearly realized that without the community of the Vilnius region, the political weight of their negotiation positions would be greatly weakened, and their possibilities to influence the situation and put their requirements into perspective would decrease. The Zionist leaders constantly drew the attention of influential persons and societies of different countries to, in their opinion, falsified statistical data about the number of inhabitants of Vilnius and their national structure.⁴⁶ In one of the many articles on this topic that appeared in the pro-Zionist newspaper *Lezte Naves*, in 1917–1918, Jakub Wygodzki drew attention to the fact that the question to who Vilnius should belong—Poles or Lithuanians—was wrong. According to him, the ethnic statistics would give a clear and grounded answer, if it were not distorted by "Polish chauvinists," who could not stand such a "national disaster." This first occurred after the results of the First Duma elections,⁴⁷ and later in the period of the German military administration, when Polish Christians living in the surrounding villages were added to the number of inhabitants of Vilnius, thus decreasing the number of Jews from the absolute majority to one third of the population.⁴⁸

According to Zionist leaders, exceptional privileges for Lithuanians from Germany's side would be understandable in the case of "Lithuania Minor" (later named as the "Lithuania of Kaunas"), in which Lithuanians constituted the absolute majority. Yet, the recognition of Lithuania with its historical capital, in which Lithuanians were in the same minority as all the other nations, was equal to pushing Jews and Belarusians into the Polish embrace: "Jews and Belarusians have not yet sided with Poles, but it can still happen."⁴⁹ However, statements about a possible rapprochement of Poles and Jews were more reminiscent of desperate attempts to retain the status of strategic partners in the eyes of Lithuanian political leaders than a change of priorities of Zionist politics based on actual advantage. From 1916 to 1918, variants of the future of the Jewish community were discussed by the Vilnius Zionists, except the possibility to become "Polish Jews," as the guarantees of equal social and national rights were not expected from the Poles. All the more, there was a danger that the Poles could even infringe on the right of Jews to protect their "national identity, language, and ancient culture, which has been inherited from their forefathers and is older than that of the Poles themselves."⁵⁰ Becoming subjects of Poland was equal to a pattern found in the famous literary work by

Dante, passing through the gates of hell: “Danger for the Jews is quite big... We can bury the hopes of national autonomy in our country. Our cultural aims will fade away, and we will bow lower and lower under the whip of Polish petty noblemen, even worse than in the worst times of the Romanov rule.”⁵¹

Two ways of solving the problem were suggested. First, to form national councils of other minorities in Lithuania, operating in parallel to Lithuania’s Provisional Council, which was considered an exceptionally Lithuanian National Council. Second, to ensure the cooperation of presidiums of all councils, or fundamentally reform the existing Council, so that the country’s national groups would be proportionally represented according to their size. The proposal of two seats in the Council for Jewish representatives, as well as the principle of how these representatives should join the Council, was described as “insulting”: “Lithuanians see themselves as the masters of the country, and other nationalities completely depend on their good will. Opposition to Lithuanian autocracy is realized as opposition to the country’s independence... Lithuanian representatives should be elected in general elections, while other representatives should be co-opted, and this should be coordinated with the existing members of the Council. It means that the Lithuanians have the power to decide which representatives of other nationalities they would like to cooperate with. It is obvious that under these circumstances nobody wanted to be co-opted into Lithuania’s Provisional Council, and in the eyes of other nationalities it was seen as a parody.”⁵²

After the negotiations with the temporary German commissar in Lithuania, permission was finally obtained to assemble a conference of the country’s Zionists. The Zionist conference that was held on 5–8 December 1918 in Vilnius rallied the small Zionist groups that operated in the territory of Lithuania into a Zionist Union separated from Russia. This symbolic act may also be understood as a practical proof of the Zionist position toward Lithuania, recognizing it as an independent political formation. In the first conference of Lithuanian Zionists, several political resolutions on the coordination of Jewish politics and representation of national interests were adopted. The necessity of establishing a world Jewish representative office and the establishing a Jewish representative office in each country, in this way recognizing that Jews belonged to one nation, and their nation was a member of the League of Nations with full rights, was considered one of the most urgent tasks of the moment.⁵³ The WZO claimed to represent the Jewish Agency. In the rhetoric of its leaders, the WZO was always represented as a protector of

the entire nation struggling for its better future. However, it seems that the Lithuanian Zionists sought legitimization of their “monopolistic” positions on the “Jewish street.” Shimshon Rosenboim emphasized, “The Zionists are distinguished among other parties in that they implement Jewish politics, but not politics for the Jews... This party was the first on the “Jewish street” to advance the idea of autonomy, which in the long run became the general slogan of many parties. The same thing also happened with other exclusively Zionist ideas, for example, those related to Palestine.”⁵⁴

The goal, which had already been advanced by the Zionist leaders in their negotiations with the Lithuanian Council—to seek proportional representation of Jews in the administrative and legal institutions and guarantee their civic, political, and national rights, to be confirmed by the country’s highest law—was distinguished among the conference decisions.⁵⁵ Besides, as Rosenbaum stressed in his speech, “Law itself does not guarantee the rights. Jews themselves must become lawmakers. The proportional election principle should guarantee that Jews be represented in authority institutions of all levels.”⁵⁶

The resolutions that addressed the future of the Lithuanian state, the position of Jews in that state, and possible Jewish-Lithuanian cooperation, emphasized that the assembled hailed the establishing of Lithuania as a free and democratic state. Keep in mind that the urgent requirements of that time, “for the protection of peace and order in the country,” granted the Council the right to seek recognition and carry out the advanced tasks. However, the participation of Zionist representatives in the Council’s work could be imagined only under the following conditions: “(1) the Council shall respect our opinion of what concerns its competence; (2) the Council shall be ready to recognize proportional representation of all nations; and (3) the Council shall not create any obstacles in the formation of Jewish self-government institutions and the assembling of a Jewish conference in Lithuania, which will elect Jewish representatives to the provisional government of Lithuania.”⁵⁷

In his speech given at the Zionist conference, Rosenboim, referring to the general opinion of the executive committee of the WZO, insisted that Jews side with Lithuanians and protect the interests of independent Lithuania, as only in that case would Jews have a possibility of “free development.” He also stressed that it was necessary “to support Belarusian interests as well, so that Lithuanian Jews would not be divided, and the very concept of Lithuania would occupy a much larger space than Lithuanians themselves can imagine.”⁵⁸

The changes that had taken place inside the Lithuanian Zionist organization also had a considerable impact on the final resolutions of the conference. In the latter half of 1918, along with other Jews, representatives of the new generation of Zionists began to return from Russia to Lithuania from forced evacuation. Having been born in ethnic Lithuania and having studied in Russian universities, they brought along the spirit and ideas of the Russian revolution, which gave new vigor to the activity of local Zionists, introduced new trends, and looked attractive for the Jewish youth, but alongside caused internal contradictions among the Zionists. Describing the situation of Zionism in Lithuania at the end of 1918, Rosenboim noted that by the efforts of the returning colleagues who distinctly stated their opinion during the Zionist conference at the beginning of December, the Zionist movement was consolidated in ideological and material respect.⁵⁹ Initiative, as well as influence on the Jewish community began to slip from the hands of the “old Zionist commanders.” Wygodzki distanced himself from the new circle of the promoters of socialist Zionism and those who flirted with the Jewish left wing. Rosenboim was planning to use his experience in the field of Zionism and general issues of European Jewry in the new centers of the Central Committee of the WZO established abroad, and seriously considered leaving Vilnius.⁶⁰ The Lithuanian Zionist leaders, who were appointed by “party democracy” to look at the problems of Jewish community life from the narrow viewpoint of the party and solve them by strictly following the Zionist ideal, could no longer speak on behalf of “all Jews” and claim to represent the wide masses on the “Jewish street.” They also expressed their indignation at the weak will, connivance, and helplessness of the Central Committee of the WZO in negotiating with the world’s great powers regarding the future fate of Eastern European Jews, which further weakened the positions of the Vilnius Zionists.⁶¹

Thanks to the efforts of the leaders of the organization—Rosenboim and Wygodzki—it was decided at the Zionist conference that in the current circumstances Jewish representatives could temporarily participate in the activity of the country’s government institutions by agreeing to be co-opted into the Lithuanian Council, though without officially representing the Lithuanian Zionist organization. The proclamation of Lithuania’s independence meant an “unavoidable fact” of the appearance of a new territorial formation, in which a former ethnic minority of the Russian empire, which never interested Jews in the cultural or economic respect, would become the national majority. The Zionists could not regard the idea of the Lithuanian state on the ethnic basis as a priority, but to live in one

state with a small Lithuanian nation might have seemed safer. The changes in the Lithuanian Zionist organization itself, and the unfavorable situation in the country—Belarusian representatives, considered by the Zionists as allies in the issues of proportional representation of national minorities in the country's administration, already were in the Council on 27 November 1918—and on the international arena, when Germany retreated from active politics in Eastern Europe after the November Revolution of 1918, pushed the Zionists into self-isolation. Thus, all these circumstances prompted the Zionists to join the Lithuanian Council.

Conclusion

The unchanging Zionist priorities—to ensure the civic, political, and national rights of the country's Jews and proportional representation of the community in governing bodies, to preserve the Vilnius Jews as an integral part of the Lithuanian Jewish community, and the goal of the Jewish Lite (Lithuania with wider boundaries than its ethnic territory)—that appeared in the visions of their leaders did not radically contradict the Lithuanian conception of statehood and did not meet the requirement to form a confederation. The long-term animosity between Jews and Poles and the outbreaks of brutal antisemitism of the latter were important, but not the only reasons for the anti-Polish attitude. The Zionist leaders realized that by becoming supporters of the Polish aspirations, they would have even less power to influence the course of events. That is, it became clear that the Poles claiming to restore Great Poland with the widest possible boundaries waited for the agreement of the country's population, but were not ready to make concessions in negotiations and take into account the requirements of other nationalities. The Zionists pictured Poland as a multinational state with the ideology of chauvinistic nationalism internally and fanatic imperialism externally. It is important to note that if the legitimization of Lithuania's independence depended on Germany's position, the guarantee of Poland's independence was the Entente states. In this case there were even fewer possibilities to soften the course of Polish politics unfavorable to Jews by trying to win the favor of the political elite of the Entente states, and to find a unanimous view on the Jewish situation in the country and the legitimacy of their interests.

Jews did not participate in the important organs that legitimized Lithuania's statehood from 1917 to 1918, because the results of the preceding negotiations were rather unfavorable. At the end of 1918, their

agreement to be co-opted into the Lithuanian Council despite their former requirements showed that the Zionists minimized their political expectations, so they would not remain empty-handed in the future. The possibility to regroup the political forces, alter the long-established balance, retain their authority on the “Jewish street,” and act on behalf of all Lithuanian Jews in the face of new circumstances was another stimulus for the Zionists to ease their goals.

The Balfour Declaration and the Copenhagen Manifesto, which acknowledged the Jewish rights to the nation’s National Home in Palestine, advanced the specific aims of Zionism in the first place. In the national state of Lithuania with ethnic boundaries, the practical implementation of the idea of national autonomy remained for the Zionists the sole priority from those that had been declared earlier. It was expected that Lithuania, having become a subject on the international arena, would not only justify the basic expectations of the Zionists—that is, guarantee the political, civic, and national rights, create a favorable environment for the fostering of the Jewish spirit and education of the young generation, and eliminate the outbreaks of antisemitism—but also mean protection from the extreme nationalism and radicalism gaining ground from the neighboring states.

NOTES

- 1 For more, see Š. Liekis, “Žydai: ‘Kaimynai’ ar ‘svetimieji’? Etninių mažumų problematika Lietuvos istorijos moksle,” *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, vol. 2, (Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, 2002), pp. 114–120.
- 2 S. Atamukas, *Lietuvos žydų kelias* (Vilnius: Alma Littera, 1998); D. Levin, *Trumpa žydų istorija Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Studija 101, 2000); *Lietuvos žydai 1918–1940* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2000); *Atminties dienos*, Tarptautinės konferencijos Vilniaus geto sunaikinimo 50–čiui medžiaga (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1995); L. Truska, *Lietuviai ir žydai nuo XIX a. pab. iki 1941 m. birželio* (Vilnius: Vilniaus Pedagoginis Universitetas, 2005).
- 3 *Lietuvos Mokslų Akademijos Metraštis*, vol. 14, Mokslinės konferencijos “Katalikų bažnyčia ir lietuvių-žydų santykiai” medžiaga (Vilnius: Katalikų akademija, 1999); A. Eidintas, *Lietuvos žydų žudynių byla* (Vilnius: Vaga, 2001); T. Balkelis, “Politinė tautinių mažumų partnerystė,” *Šiaurės Atėnai*, 18 July 1998; Š. Liekis, “On Jewish Participation in the Taryba in 1918,” *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, vol. 4, (Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of History, 1999), pp. 62–82.
- 4 For more, see A. Shohat, “The Beginning of Anti-Semitism in Independent Lithuania,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 2, (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1958); Š. Liekis, “On the Jewish Participation in the Taryba in 1918”; Š. Liekis, *A State within a State? Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania 1918–1925* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2003).

- 5 A declaration adopted at the first Congress of the world Zionists in Basel in 1897 became the official ideological program of all Zionist organizations, which proclaimed the main goal of establishing a publicly and legally assured home for the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael, and strengthening the Jewish-national feeling and consciousness in the diaspora.
- 6 “Der tsuzamenfor in Vilno. Unser gegenvartige arbit,” *Dos Judishe Folk*, 27 July 1906.
- 7 H. H. Ben Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 989.
- 8 Having retreated from Lithuania to Russia and having transferred their central committee to St. Petersburg, the Zionists together with other Jewish refugees who studied in Russian universities during or after the war (e.g., A. Idelson, J. Brutzkus, M. Soloveichik) made a considerable contribution as members of the editorial boards of the Zionist press and themselves publishing informational and propaganda articles.
- 9 Y. Brojdes, *Vilna ha-yehudit ve-askaneha* (Tel Aviv: Histadrut olei vilna we-ha-galil, 1939), pp. 301–302.
- 10 Rosenboim’s Report to the Central Zionist Bureau in Berlin, 22 March 1916, Central Zionist Archive in Jerusalem (hereinafter CZA), F. Z3, File 509, n.p.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Correspondence of the Central Zionist Bureau, CZA, F. Z3, File 131, 133, 135, 824, 825 et al.
- 13 Political memoranda of and to the EAC, 1915–1918, CZA, F. Z3, File 10, n.p.; Minutes of meetings of Zionist leaders with politicians and statesmen, 1914–1919, CZA, F. Z3, File 11, n.p.
- 14 A German proverb.
- 15 D. Levin, *Trumpa žydų istorija Lietuvoje*, pp. 66–71.
- 16 V. Vareikis, “Vilniaus žydų gyvenimo ir politinės orientacijos bruožai XIX–XX a. I pus. (lietuviškas požiūris),” *Vilniaus žydų intelektualinis gyvenimas iki Antrojo pasaulinio karo*, Tarptautinės mokslinės konferencijos “Vilniaus žydų intelektualinis gyvenimas iki Antrojo pasaulinio karo” medžiaga (Vilnius: Mokslo aidai, 2004), p. 74; L. Stein, “Der geyresh fun di litvishe yidn in fayer fun der ershter velt milkhome (1914–1918),” *Lite*, vol. 1 (New York: Jewish-Cultural Society, 1951), pp. 104–105, 107–108; D. Levin, *Trumpa žydų istorija Lietuvoje*, pp. 67–70.
- 17 Rosenboim’s Report to the Central Zionist Bureau in Berlin, 22 March 1916, CZA, F. Z3, File 509, n.p.
- 18 A. Chayesh, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Lithuania in the Spring of 1915: The Case of Ziemelis*, available at www.jewishgen.org/Litvak/HTML?OnlineJournals/expulsion.htm.
- 19 Rosenboim’s Report to the Central Zionist Bureau in Berlin, 22 March 1916, CZA, F. Z3, File 509, n.p.
- 20 Hantke’s Letter to Rosenboim, Berlin, 4 April 1916, CZA, F. Z3, File 509, n.p.
- 21 Appeal to Mr. Nadolny, Berlin, 19 February 1918, CZA, F. Z3, File 509, n.p.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Rosenboim’s Letter to Dr. Hantke, Vilnius, 21 November 1917, CZA, F. Z3, File 509, n.p.
- 25 Warburg’s Letter to Rosenboim, Berlin, 12 July 1917, CZA, F. Z3, File 509, n.p.

- 26 T. Balkelis, "Politinė tautinių mažumų partnerystė."
- 27 The term "Jewish National Home" used in the Zionist rhetoric was understood as the foundation of the Jewish state in Palestine, while the same term predominant in the statements of the world's greatest powers meant the acknowledgement of the right to self-determination and the historical rights to the land of Palestine for the Jewish nation without additional political obligations.
- 28 "Tsienistishe miting in Vilne," *Lezte Naves*, 16 December 1917.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 A. Ben Tsvi, *Geshikhte fun tsionizm fun dr. Herzl biz nokh der Balfur deklaratsie* (Kau-nas, 1935), p. 90.
- 31 Hantke's Letter to the *Oberost* Administration, Berlin, 26 October 1917, CZA, F. Z3, File 131, n.p.
- 32 T. Balkelis, "Politinė tautinių mažumų partnerystė."
- 33 Hantke's Letter to Martin Salinger, 20 December 1917, CZA, F. Z3, File 509, n.p.
- 34 Rosenboim's Report to Paul Nathan, Vilnius, CZA, F. Z3, File 509, n.p.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Copy of the Report, Berlin, 6 May 1918, CZA, F. Z3, File 133, n.p.
- 37 Rosenboim's Report about Lithuania, Vilnius, CZA, F. Z3, File 131, n.p.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Rosenboim's Letter to Paul Nathan, confidentially, Vilnius, 6 May 1918, CZA, F. Z3, File 509, n.p.
- 40 Address to Mr. Nadolny, Berlin, 19 February 1918, CZA, F. Z3, File 509, n.p.
- 41 Rosenboim's Letter to Paul Nathan, confidentially, Vilnius, 6 May 1918, CZA, F. Z3, File 509, n.p.
- 42 A. Ben Tsvi, *Geshikhte fun tsionizm fun dr. Herzl biz nokh der Balfur deklaratsie*, p. 92.
- 43 Dr. Wygodzki, "Vil'na pol'skii ili litovskii gorod?" article from *Lezte Naves*, 23 June 1918, Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių bibliotekos Rankraščių skyrius (Manu-script Department of the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences) (hereinafter LMAVB RS), f. 255, b. 929, l. 50.
- 44 I. Cohen, *Vilna* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1943), p. 278.
- 45 Arthur Hantke's Letter to the Ober-Ost Administration, Berlin, 26 October 1917, CZA, F. Z3, File 6, n.p.
- 46 A reference to the figures provided by Lithuanian political leaders to the foreign press. Antanas Smetona's interview in "Vossische Zeitung" (a daily of the liberal and intellec-tual orientation), in which he indicated that 33,000 ethnic Lithuanians supposedly lived in Vilnius. The Polish political leaders also juggled with statistics to their own conven-ience, particularly at the turn of the early 1900s, in the local press and on the interna-tional arena, in discussions about the Vilnius region.
- 47 See the article by D. Staliūnas in the current collection.
- 48 Dr. Wygodzki, "Vil'na pol'skii ili litovskii gorod?" *Lezte Naves*, 23 June 1918, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 929, l. 50.
- 49 Address to Mr. Nadolny, Berlin, 19 February 1918, CZA, F. Z3, File 509, n.p.
- 50 Olshvanger, "Jerusalim Litvy v opasnosti!" *Lezte Naves*, 16 June 1918, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 929, l. 51; M. Shalit, "Wem darf Wilna gehoeren?" *Lezte Naves*, 6 October 1918, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 929, l. 49.
- 51 Olshvanger, "Pol'sha i Vil'na," *Lezte Naves*, 23 June 1918, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 929, l. 55.

52 Ibid.

53 Decisions of the Zionist Conference in Vilnius, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 929, l. 26.

54 Speech of Barrister S. Rosenboim at the Zionist Conference in Vilnius, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 929, l. 31.

55 Decisions of the Zionist Conference in Vilnius, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 929, l. 26.

56 Speech of Barrister S. Rosenboim at the Zionist Conference in Vilnius, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 929, l. 31.

57 Decisions of the Zionist Conference in Vilnius, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 929, l. 26.

58 Speech of Barrister S. Rosenboim at the Zionist Conference in Vilnius, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 929, l. 31.

59 Report about Lithuania by Mister Barrister Rosenboim from Vilnius, CZA, F. Z3, File 510, n.p.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

LITHUANIAN ADMINISTRATION AND THE PARTICIPATION OF JEWS IN THE ELECTIONS TO THE CONSTITUENT SEIMAS

VLADAS SIRUTAVIČIUS

Introduction and Historiographic Survey

The issue of the elections to the Constituent Seimas—one of the most important institutions of the modern, national, and democratic Lithuanian state—has not received enough discussion in Lithuanian historiography. The problem of participation (or, to put it plainly, activity) in the elections has not been addressed completely. Two approaches to this problem prevail in historiography. In the Soviet period, Lithuanian historiographers strongly doubted the officially published statistics claiming that “more than 90 percent of citizens” participated in the elections to the Constituent Seimas.¹ During the first session of the Constituent Seimas, its chairman Aleksandras Stulginskis, announced this figure referring to the data provided by the Chief Election Committee (CEC). (According to statistics, 682,291 voters participated in the elections.)² Probably the most critical study on the elections to the Constituent Seimas was written by historian S. Noreikienė. In her opinion, the officially proclaimed 90 percent referred only to those included in the election lists, not the general number of electors. Therefore, in the spring of 1920, there were approximately 1.1 million people with the right to vote in Lithuania. On the basis of these calculations, Noreikienė concluded that approximately 70 percent of persons of “the voting age” (i.e., twenty-one years of age or older) took part in the elections.³

Lithuanian historiography in exile did not doubt the officially proclaimed figures. It sought to emphasize the mass and democratic nature of the elections to the Constituent Seimas. This approach is best revealed in a monograph by V. Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė.⁴ Although the author notes that at the beginning of 1920, “wide masses of the population” were still indifferent to the elections, as the elections approached, the interest rapidly

grew. The rise of interest and activity was influenced by party agitation and also by the hopes of the larger part of the population (above all, certainly, Lithuanians) that the Seimas would solve the basic issue—land. P. Čepėnas described the elections and their course in a similar way. In his opinion, party agitation also played the major role, as by that time the major parties already had local branches, and that agitation “contained a considerable doze of demagogy.”⁵ Such an interpretation of the elections to the Constituent Seimas is typical of the newest Lithuanian historiography.⁶ Liudas Truska focuses specifically on the issue of electoral activity in his article, and tends to agree with the predominant opinion that electoral activity was high. He notices an important problem that does not allow us to identify a concrete expression of this activity—the missing *total number of electors*, which cannot be established on the basis of reliable statistics.⁷ It should be acknowledged that the possibilities to verifying the assessments of the elections to the Constituent Seimas long established in historiography from the viewpoint of participation are rather limited—mainly due to the incomplete nature of the archived material. It does not allow us to answer the question of how many persons of voting age lived in the territory controlled by the Lithuanian government in the spring of 1920, and how many of them were included in the election lists.⁸

In this chapter several important questions are discussed. First, the circumstances that might have had some influence on electoral activity are analyzed. Second, the problem that may be defined as the participation of national minorities, above all Jews, in the elections is considered. More concretely, the Lithuanian-Jewish relations in the period of the elections to the Constituent Seimas will be analyzed with the goal of finding out if the nature of these relations might have had any influence on electoral activity.⁹ In regard to historiography, this problem did not receive any attention.¹⁰ It should be stated that the research of both Lithuanian and Jewish authors, who limited themselves to general remarks, was sort of like a “honeymoon” in the Lithuanian-Jewish relations.¹¹ There were several circumstances that gave ground for such speculations. First was a declaration of 5 August 1919 sent to the Committee of the Jewish Delegations at the Paris Conference, in which the Lithuanian state pledged to respect the civic and cultural rights of its Jewish citizens and grant them wide autonomy.¹² Second, was the temporary law on the right of the committees of Jewish communities to impose taxes on their members, adopted by the Lithuanian government on 10 January 1920. This law actually legitimized the administrative autonomy of Jews. Finally, an additional circumstance that deserves mentioning—in the Republic of Lithua-

nia, despite a certain tension typical of war, turmoil, and the ensuing paralysis of the government—was that there were no larger anti-Jewish pogroms.

In the article by historian S. Kaubrys, the issue of Jewish participation in the elections to the Constituent Seimas is discussed briefly, but almost in complete isolation from the political and social context of Lithuania of the period. Referring to a statistical bulletin, Kaubrys counted that 84,765 electors (12.4% of the total number of votes) voted for the ballots of national minorities. Such results guaranteed the minorities ten seats in the Constituent Seimas. A total of 44,709 electors voted for the sole Jewish political organization that participated in the elections—the Jewish Popular Union—and as a result, the Jews had the most (six) representatives in the Seimas.¹³ It is interesting to note that in the elections to the First Seimas in 1922, approximately 135,000 electors already voted for the ballots of national minorities. (However, the elections took place according to the new election law, thus national minorities won as few as five seats.) Approximately 55,000 electors voted for Jewish political organizations, which allowed the Jews to have three representatives in the Seimas.¹⁴ Incidentally, in the elections to the First Seimas, Polish political organizations received approximately 57,000 votes, when in the elections to the Constituent Seimas approximately 33,000 electors voted for Polish representatives. These shifts can hardly be explained by an increase of population, migration, or the delayed process of naturalization. Another version is quite possible: during the elections to the Constituent Seimas, part of the representatives of the national minorities (probably Poles in the first place) were not included in the election lists due to certain reasons.

Some Institutional and Territorial-National Aspects of the Elections to the Constituent Seimas

In this chapter, the institutional aspects of organizing the elections will not be discussed in greater detail, but an outline of the basic facts will be presented. The Cabinet of Ministers decided to set up a commission for preparing the election law in mid-May 1919.¹⁵ Since the formation of the commission's structure took a long time, it did not begin its work until June. The then-minister of internal affairs P. Leonas was appointed head of the commission, which also included representatives of major political parties and national minorities. (Only the Polish and Jewish representatives took part in the activity of the commission. The Jews were repre-

sented by the “members of the Jewish faction” of the Kaunas administrative board, M. Soloveichik and L. Garfunkel.)¹⁶ The commission was expected to finish its work in July, but failed to prepare the law on time. The principle of formation of the CEC aroused much discussion. Apparently, part of the members of the commission thought the political movements, parties, and national minorities should be represented as much as possible in the CEC.¹⁷ There were some disagreements among the members of the commission regarding the number, structure, and area of electoral districts. However, the major obstacle in the commission’s work was that not all the districts provided data about the number of inhabitants. Thus, the commission could not count how many representatives each district was supposed to delegate to the Constituent Seimas. The State Council approved the election law on 30 October, and President A. Smetona and Prime Minister E. Galvanauskas signed it almost a month later on November 20. It should be noted that in the published version of the law, neither the general number of the deputies of the Constituent Seimas, nor the number of representatives delegated by each district was indicated.¹⁸ The law proclaimed that elections should be general, equal, secret, and executed according to the proportional system. “All Lithuanian citizens” who were twenty-one years of age or older, regardless of their confession, nationality, and gender, had the right to participate in the elections. On 1 March 1920, martial law that had been in place since October 1919 was lifted in the large territory controlled by the Lithuanian government. Though the lifting of martial law could be regarded as important for the democratic nature of the elections, it should also be noted that locally (in the districts) the influence of military commandants remained great, which created preconditions for various misdemeanors and arbitrary rule.¹⁹

Finally, on 12 January, the date of the elections to the Constituent Seimas was announced for 14–15 April. Already after the elections had begun, the Lithuanian government decided to prolong them for one more day for the following two reasons: fear that the election committees “would not have enough time to collect the citizens’ votes,” and citizens’ complaints about incorrectly compiled election lists.²⁰

However, one of the most interesting issues related to the elections to the Constituent Seimas was the territorial-national issue. Formally the elections were planned to be held in ten districts.²¹ From the territorial viewpoint this division complied with the law of district borders and centers adopted on 1 July 1919.²² According to the administrative division of Czarist Russia, the territory, in which the Lithuanian government intended to organize the elections to the Constituent Seimas, was comprised of the

entire Kaunas *gubernia*, Vilnius *gubernia* (except the two eastern Dysna and Wilejka districts), the entire Suwałki *gubernia*, and the northwestern part of the Grodno *gubernia* (in total, five districts—those of Grodno, Sokółka, Białystok, Bielsk, and Volkovysk; the elections also had to be organized in Bielovezh, which was part of the Pruzhany district, the Grodno *gubernia*).

It has been written in Lithuanian historiography about the territorial construction of the Lithuanian state based on four *gubernias* about its genesis and development. According to Č. Laurinavičius, such territorial construction was born in the minds of Lithuanian politicians, as they sought to combine two principles important to a modern state: the nation's self-determination and traditional statehood. Laurinavičius also noted that the territorial program underwent an evolution in Lithuanian political consciousness—from historical to more ethnographic Lithuania. The actual situation that had been formed during World War I also had an impact on the territorial corrections.²³ It was formulated by Petras Klimas in 1917 in his project of the territory of ethnographic Lithuania, according to which the country was stripped down to a “healthy nucleus” by renouncing the larger part of the Grodno *gubernia*, the eastern districts of the Vilnius *gubernia*, and in the Suwałki *gubernia* including Seinai, but leaving out Suwałki and Augustów.²⁴ After World War I, a shift occurred in Lithuania's territorial politics, and the idea of four *gubernias*, with an addition of the region of East Prussia, was revived again.²⁵

The territory envisaged in the law of the elections to the Constituent Seimas in fact testified to this “return,” though with some corrections. However, even in this corrected territory of four *gubernias* Lithuanians would not have constituted the majority, or that majority would have been unsubstantial. Thus, one can affirm that in terms of the territorial factor, the law envisaged not so much the Lithuanian national state, where Lithuanians would comprise the majority and would be the state-constituting factor. Rather it envisages a *polyethnic political formation* reminiscent of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in its ethnic composition, which could only exist because of a precarious balance of interests of Lithuanians, Poles, Jews, and Belarusians. Unfortunately, the available archived sources (above all, the working material of the commission for the preparation of the law and the discussions at the State Council) do not allow us to judge how the architects of the law realized the political consequences of territorial issues.

Two months prior to the elections, the CEC announced how many representatives each district should delegate to the Constituent Seimas.²⁶ Ac-

cording to that information, in four districts (Vilnius, Lyda, Białystok, and Grodno), which were beyond the Lithuanian government's control, seventy-nine representatives to the Constituent Seimas had to be elected. Lithuanians who lived in East Prussia had to delegate nine representatives to the Constituent Seimas. In March of the same year, in *The News of the Provisional Government*, the "final" number of members of the Constituent Seimas and the corrected (increased) number of deputies from four districts was announced.²⁷ According to this decision of the CEC, 229 representatives to the Constituent Seimas had to be elected in ten electoral districts. In the territory controlled by the Lithuanian government, 112 representatives had to be elected. In the territory beyond the Lithuanian government's control (four districts), in which, as is known, the elections did not take place, 108 deputies had to be elected (according to the former decision of the CEC-79). As before, nine deputies had to be delegated by the Lithuanians of East Prussia. (Eventually 112 representatives were elected to the Seimas.)

It would be difficult to say what determined the increase in the number of representatives from four districts from 79 to 108. This decision of the election committee may have been influenced by purely formal circumstances—the total number of inhabitants and deputies who represented them was still being specified. However, one cannot rule out the supposition that the "pressure" of the Polish and Jewish members of the CEC, who might have found the number of delegates from four districts artificially decreased, had some influence as well. Nevertheless, it can be confirmed that the introduced "changes" better corresponded with the Polish and Jewish interests. (Jews and Poles constituted a significant part of the population in the four districts.)

For the purpose of establishing the number of deputies from each district, it was necessary to know the number of inhabitants in each district. It was the law-preparing committee that first addressed these issues. In July 1919, the chairman of the committee P. Leonas sent out a letter to the district committees, encouraging them to provide information about the number of inhabitants.²⁸ Before long, the committee began to receive the first data; as a rule, it was incomplete, and the nationality of the inhabitants was not indicated. At the end of 1919 and the very beginning of 1920, the law-preparing committee managed to collect a mass of data and generalize it. Yet, the data covered only six districts, and the Lithuanian authorities did not have any information about the number of inhabitants in the remaining four districts.²⁹ The surviving documents reveal how the CEC planned to "principally" solve the problem of the number of inhabi-

tants and potential electors. The budgets of the CEC could serve as a good illustration.³⁰ They show that in the opinion of the election organizers, approximately 250,000 people lived in one district, of which 170,000, or 68 percent had the right to vote (i.e., those who were twenty-one years of age or older).³¹ Thus, it was calculated that in ten districts the number of potential electors should have been 1,700,000, and in six districts 1,020,000. Taking into account these calculations, the CEC planned its budget for the production of envelopes (which had to be given to each elector for putting a voting ballot into) and voting ballots ("voting cards"). Unfortunately, it was unknown how many envelopes and "cards" were actually produced. It should be noted that all calculations were made for all ten districts.

Having agreed on the number of districts in principle, the law-preparing committee had to resolve arising disagreements about the boundaries of separate districts. Polish representatives in the committee (M. Junowicz and K. Błażewicz) suggested changing the boundaries of several districts. These changes were motivated by a goal "to protect the national minorities" and the conviction that in some districts "Poles remained disadvantaged."³² More concretely, it was suggested to combine the Ukmergė district with the Kaunas district and to separate the Šiauliai district from the Panevėžys district. However, the most important suggestion was to establish the Suwałki district, which, according to the draft proposed by the Poles, would also include the Sejny and Augustów districts. The majority of the committee members rejected these suggestions (seven voted against, two voted for, and one abstained). The Jewish representative L. Garfunkel probably abstained.³³

The Problem of Election Lists

According to the law, all Lithuanian citizens included in the district election lists (i.e., those who were twenty-one years of age or older) could take part in the elections. Election lists had to be completed forty days prior to the elections (i.e., by March 4). The electors were reserved the right to get acquainted with those lists and, if necessary, to appeal to the election committee with a request to make changes.

Who were these Lithuanian citizens? Formally, the law of Lithuanian citizenship adopted in January 1919 answered this question. According to the law, the persons whose parents "lived in Lithuania since ancient times," who themselves always lived in Lithuania, their children who,

though did not always live in Lithuania, returned to live there, persons who lived in Lithuania before 1914 no less than ten years or had property or a permanent job, and several other categories of persons were considered Lithuanian citizens. However, in that law nothing was said about the territory of Lithuania. This issue was addressed by the law of district borders adopted on 1 July 1919. According to this law, the territory of Lithuania comprised the Kaunas and Suwalki *gubernias*, the western part of the Vilnius *gubernia*, and the northwestern part of the Grodno *gubernia*. (It was in this territory that the elections to the Constituent Seimas were planned to be “organized.”) The law of passports adopted in July 1919 was supposed to resolve the question of citizenship.³⁴ However, it was very difficult to put this law into practice, and the final date of switching to new Lithuanian passports was postponed several times.³⁵ Thus it is quite possible that the election lists of the Constituent Seimas became an efficient instrument of controlling the granting of Lithuanian citizenship and loyalty to the state. State officials also publicly spoke about it. At the end of 1919, the chairman of the State Council Stasys Šilingas wrote that the issue of citizenship was not clear and therefore there were many people in Lithuania who would not become citizens. Thus, election lists were necessary, as cities and towns were “flooded by new mediocre persons, who were often foreign to Lithuania and could not exercise citizens’ rights.”³⁶ It was not specified who these foreign “persons” that “flooded” Lithuanian cities and towns were.

It should be noted that while compiling election lists, official institutions in Lithuania faced various problems. It can be seen from the correspondence of the CEC with local administrative institutions. The CEC repeatedly encouraged municipalities and district administrative boards to speed up compiling the election lists.³⁷ Even threats of criminal punishment were not avoided.³⁸ However, even strict advice and threats did not accelerate the compiling of the election lists. In composing the election lists, mistakes and inaccuracies often occurred.³⁹ As the elections were approaching, committees more frequently addressed the CEC with requests to assign them additional ballots. These shortages of ballots resulted from the failure of rural districts to supply information about the exact number of electors in time.⁴⁰ In general, one can affirm that circumstances for the compilation of precise election lists were unfavorable. This conclusion is confirmed by a letter the CEC sent to local administrative institutions in mid-March. As was asserted in this letter, the election committee received “a great deal of information” about the incorrect compilation of election lists. As noted in the letter, “A great *many inhabitants*,

above all Lithuanians, were not included in the lists at all, because the compilers did not visit many houses and apartments."⁴¹

The press also wrote about similar problems, stressing the fact that many Lithuanians were not included in the election lists. Several articles on this topic were published in the official newspaper *Lietuva*. As was stated in one of its issues, in Kaunas election lists were compiled by non-Lithuanians, thus Lithuanian family names were often misspelled, and many people were often left off the lists. Several days later, an article on the same topic appeared in the *Lietuva*: it claimed that while compiling the lists, families were omitted, and their inhabitants were not included.⁴² It would be difficult to answer the question to what extent this information was true, and how many cases of this kind did occur. Keeping in mind the structure and literacy of the inhabitants of Kaunas, quite a considerable number of non-Lithuanians may have been among the compilers of election lists. However, it is unknown if the efforts to decrease the number of Lithuanian electors were done on purpose. On the other hand, there were opposite instances as well, when non-Lithuanians were not included in the election lists. In the Šiauliai district, it turned out that in the process of preparing for the elections the administrative board of the Pakruojis rural district crossed off all Jews from the election lists. The chairman of the election committee of the rural district motivated this decision by the fact that the Jews "had announced they were going to vote separately." The chairman of the election committee of the Šiauliai district K. Venclauskis deemed this decision illegal and ordered to have the election lists corrected as soon as possible.⁴³ The Kaišiadorys Jewish community complained to the district's election committee that the election lists had been compiled according to the old census, thus "a considerable part" of Jews could not participate in the elections. (Apparently there were more similar cases.) In this case the committee rejected the complaint as unjustified.⁴⁴

The examples presented above show that the precision in compiling the election lists was determined by various circumstances, including the qualification of local officials, and according to their likes and dislikes, which sometimes could be related to nationality.

Conversely, one must admit that it is impossible to answer the question of how many citizens with the right to vote were not included in the election lists. An interesting circumstance is that the total number of persons included in the election lists was not officially published. Only the number of persons who voted is known. Due to certain circumstances at least part of the potential electors was not included in the lists as proved by various, although indirect data. Several examples can be presented. The election list

of the town of Biržai showed that 2,031 persons had the right to vote (1,495 persons, i.e., 73.6% of those included in the election lists took part in the elections).⁴⁵ According to the census of the Biržai rural district of 1919, 3,286 persons lived in Biržai at the end of 1919,⁴⁶ and according to the census of 1923, 7,526 persons.⁴⁷ It is not possible that the town's population grew twice during several years. As the total number of population was counted incorrectly, the number of electors may also have been incorrect. Let us analyze the data of the elections in the Šiauliai district, which survived more fully. According to these data, approximately 166,000, and according to other data, approximately 120,000 inhabitants were counted in the Šiauliai district (according to the census of 1923, slightly more than 203,000 inhabitants lived in the Šiauliai district). One can suppose that these differences may have emerged in the process of counting due to several reasons: migration of the population, changes of the district borders, or low professional skills of officials. On the other hand, migration and the presence of the so-called alien and drifting element were higher in cities. It is not clear how many of these people were eligible for Lithuanian citizenship. However, it is very probable that due to various reasons, some of them may not have been included in the election lists.

“There Are No Cosmopolitans in the World Now,” or Jews in the Elections to the Constituent Seimas

What was the activity of Jews in the elections to the Constituent Seimas? It is not easy to answer this question. According official statistics, 44,709 electors voted for the Jewish Popular Union at the elections. The Union submitted its candidates in all six districts and received the majority of votes (approximately 11,000) in the Kaunas district. It is probable that Jews did not vote for other political parties. However, it is almost impossible to answer the question of how many Jews had the right to vote, and how many of them were and were not included in the election lists. First, the total number of Jews who lived in Lithuania at that time and were eligible for Lithuanian citizenship is unknown. In the population statistics collected by the local authorities, nationality was not registered. According to the election law, nationality was not registered in the election lists either. (According to the data of the census of 1923, approximately 150,000 Jews lived in Lithuania.)

During the elections to the Constituent Seimas, very high migration took place in the country. According to the official data, there were ap-

proximately 180,000 refugees in the summer of 1921, though it is not clear how many Jews, as well as how many Jews who were eligible for Lithuanian citizenship by law, and who sought that citizenship, were among them. Incidentally, the minister of home affairs Rapolas Skipitis mentioned much larger numbers in his memoirs. According to him, during 1918–1921, approximately 365,000 refugees and deported persons returned from Russia to Lithuania, among them approximately 80,000 Jews.⁴⁸ According to the data found in Lithuanian historiography, czarist authorities deported approximately 160,000 Jews from the Kaunas and Suwałki *gubernias* in the spring of 1915.⁴⁹ An ample non-Lithuanian historiography exists on this topic. Historians assert that approximately 150,000 Jewish inhabitants were deported from the Kaunas *gubernia*.⁵⁰ However, both Lithuanian and non-Lithuanian scholars do not indicate how many Jews (who were deported or fled voluntarily) returned to Lithuania before the elections to the Constituent Seimas.

The data collected by Lithuanian historians would allow us to assert that the activity of Jews during various elections consistently grew. According to Šarūnas Liekis, approximately 20,000 persons participated in the elections of Jewish communities at the end of 1919, during which representatives to the first congress of Jewish communities were elected.⁵¹ As was mentioned, 44,000 Jewish electors took part in the elections to the Constituent Seimas, and in the elections to the First Seimas in 1922, slightly more than 55,000 electors voted for various Jewish political structures. In the period under discussion (i.e., from the latter half of 1919 to the spring of 1920), elections to local municipal structures took place. The research carried out by Lithuanian historians does not allow us to answer the question of how many Jews participated in them.⁵² However it does allow us to arrive at certain conclusions regarding the activity of Jews in the election and formation of local administration. It is noted in historiography that the attitude of various Jewish political structures toward the national state built by Lithuanians, and in particular, to the Lithuanian State Council as a representative of that state varied and also underwent a certain evolution—from negative to increasingly cooperative.⁵³

According to historian Morkūnaitė-Lazauskienė, while electing city councils, Jews would sometimes flat out refuse to participate in them, motivating it by the fact that they did not acknowledge the power of the Lithuania State Council. Before the order of elections was clearly established, Lithuanian inhabitants towns and cities made agreements with Jewish inhabitants regarding the quota of their representation. Jews elected their representatives at a separate congress and then delegated

them to the general committee of a city or town.⁵⁴ Yet, in many cases Jews and their political organizations participated in the formation of local administration actively enough. These tendencies grew stronger in 1919, when the elections to city councils began to be organized according to party ballots (i.e., the proportional system). According to Morkūnaitė-Lazauskienė, “the introduction of the proportional system somewhat changed the relation of national minorities in city councils—particularly to the advantage of the Jews.”⁵⁵

The Lithuanian attitude toward Jews and their participation in the formation of administrative institutions was a contradictory one. Jews were accused of collaborating with the Germans, as well as being disloyal to the new Lithuanian administration. A report from the Lithuanian Press Office regarding the situation in Skuodas in the fall of 1919 read, “Young Jewish men are enlisting together with Germans”; when an assistant to the Kretinga commandant Karlovskis arrived at Skuodas with the goal of encouraging Jews to enlist in the Lithuanian Army, Jews with the help of Germans arrested and beat him, and only after that let him go.⁵⁶ Additional reports can be found regarding the Jews collaboration with the Germans.⁵⁷ It would be difficult to answer the question of how many known instances occurred, and if all of them were correctly recorded. The indignation of Lithuanians was also aroused by Jewish migration, particularly to those places where the number of Jews was traditionally small, above all in rural settlements and districts. For example, the council of the Raudondvaris rural district, while seeking to protect the area from undesirable Jewish newcomers, passed a decree aimed to punish those inhabitants who rented a living space to the Jews. The Ministry of Home Affairs called this decree illegal and asked to annul it.⁵⁸ Indignation may have been aroused by the use of a non-Lithuanian language in daily life. The Ministry of Home Affairs sent out a circular to the heads of districts, requesting vendors (for the most part Jews) “to call out to the audience ... only in the state language.”⁵⁹ Vendors were allowed to communicate with the “audience” in other languages as well. While his decision was adopted after the elections, it is unknown how many similar situations occurred, and if it was possible to call them typical. Yet one could suppose they reflect the daily nature of the relations between the two communities. On the other hand, it should be noted that the Lithuanian authorities tried to react to cases of such “unfairness,” though it is unknown how efficiently the decisions of central administration were put into perspective in the provinces.

In the summer of 1919, the minister of home affairs Leonas was obliged to admit that municipal institutions “sometimes exercise imper-

missible behavior with regard to Jews”: Jews were made to perform responsibilities that did not pertain to them, and were imposed higher taxes than the Lithuanian inhabitants. The minister declared this kind of behavior as an infringement on their rights and equality.⁶⁰

In some cases Lithuanians were not willing to allow Jews into the elections to local administrative institutions. (It happened in Akmenė and Mažeikiai.)⁶¹ Sometimes arguments would arise about the compilation of the election lists (as was the case in Kėdainiai).⁶² It is difficult to say how many similar cases, violations, or conflicts occurred. However, it should be stated that at least the central administration of Lithuania tried to react to such complaints and violations. For example, the Jews of Vandžiogala filed a complaint with the municipality against illegal elections. The Ministry of Home Affairs ordered the head of the Kaunas district to investigate the complaint and to hold new elections, if the complaint was justified.⁶³ Unfortunately, it is unknown whether the head of the district performed any actions, if an investigation was launched, and how it ended. One can suppose that the behavior of local officials was determined by their own likes and dislikes, as well as the relations of local inhabitants and Jews, which differed from those declared by the highest Lithuanian politicians, and were not so simple. Therefore, on the one hand, the authorities could take into consideration the attitudes and moods about Jews prevailing in Lithuanian society, and on the other hand, while seeking to avoid tension and conflicts, they were obliged to suppress them. Overall, one can affirm that during the period of preparation for the elections to the Constituent Seimas, as well as during the elections, there were no major clashes or pogroms, though minor conflicts or the use of violence did occur.⁶⁴ It should be noted that the Lithuanian authorities tried to react and punish the offenders.⁶⁵

With regard to the municipal elections, several major tendencies also had an impact on the participation of Jews in the elections to the Constituent Seimas. Various Jewish political parties and groups—the Bund, the Zionists, and the Orthodox—took part in the municipal elections. As a rule, at least several lists of Jewish candidates were submitted, but after the elections Jewish political groups most often formed a common bloc. This circumstance proved that the national principle often prevailed over the existing social-political differences. This tendency did not remain unnoticed in Lithuanian society. It was confirmed in the press that the Jewish political movements refused to join forces with the Lithuanian parties, forming coalitions “on the national basis.” Such critical assessments could be found (e.g., in the press of the Lithuanian left parties) to

be more concrete, according to *Darbas* newspaper published by the Socialists–Populists (*Liaudininkai*). In its coverage of the elections to the Panevėžys city council, the *Darbas* asserted that the Social Democrats offered the Jews-Bundists to form a joint list, but the latter did not agree, thus the Christian Democrats won the elections.⁶⁶ As the elections to the Seimas were approaching, the anxiety that the Jews might receive “disproportionately many votes” thanks to their good organization, unity and national solidarity, increasingly grew.⁶⁷ *Lietuva* also began to write about it. As was stated in the editor’s column of its April’s issue, if peasants remained as passive as they were during the elections to municipalities, the elections would be won by “burghers” (i.e., Poles and Jews), as they would vote exclusively for their own lists.⁶⁸

It should be noted that on the eve of the elections to the Seimas (5–11 January 1920 in Kaunas), the first Congress of representatives of the Lithuanian Jewish communities took place. Also, there are additional important details that are worth mentioning. The Congress represented various Jewish political movements, mainly Zionist groups. The national council was elected; Sh. Rosenboim was appointed chairman, and N. Rachmilewitz and O. Finkelshtein were appointed deputy chairmen. The main issue of the Congress was the institutionalization of Jewish autonomy.⁶⁹ However, in addition to the issues related to autonomy, the standpoint on the issue of convening the Constituent Seimas was clearly defined. As was stated in the Congress resolutions, the convening of the Constituent Seimas would strengthen the “basis” of the state and would help to put the civic and national rights fully into perspective. It was also noted that the Seimas should “reflect the political consciousness and moods of the country,” and for this purpose, free and democratic elections were necessary. In order to achieve this goal, the Congress proposed to revoke martial law.⁷⁰ In the most general sense, the views of the Jewish Congress on the Constituent Seimas did not differ from the agenda of the Lithuanian political parties, mostly the left-wing parties—the Peasant Popular Party (*Liaudininkai*), the Social Democrats, and the Socialist Popular Party.

Representatives of the Lithuanian administration E. Galvanauskas and A. Voldemaras greeted the Congress and participated in its work. Despite the complaints of some delegates about the behavior of the Lithuanian authorities with regard to Jews (who confirmed that Jews were not admitted to the administration of the state “in all grades of official hierarchy”), the Congress showed that cooperative relations had been established between the Jewish political-social elite and the Lithuanian authorities. In

his greeting to the Jewish Congress, Antanas Smetona noted, "While taking care of their national affairs, Jews would be able to [concur with] the common affairs of our state."⁷¹ Such speeches of Lithuanian politicians showed that the Lithuanian political elite, or at least its part, considered it possible to coordinate the interests of the Jewish community and the Lithuanian national state. This mechanism of coordination was nothing else than putting the idea of the Jewish national autonomy into perspective. Jewish figures also expressed optimism in this regard—the minister of Jewish affairs Max Soloveichik announced at the Congress that the program of the Lithuanian authorities corresponded with the goal of autonomy of the national minorities. Jews were called "old faithful friends [of Lithuanians]."⁷²

While the Congress was still going on, on 10 January 1920, the Lithuanian government adopted the temporary law on the rights of the committees of Jewish communities to impose taxes on their members. This law laid the economic foundations for Jewish autonomy. However, one should not think that the relations of Lithuanian and Jewish politicians and political leaders were as simple as their official speeches or statements suggested. The discussions of the temporary law took place in a rather tense atmosphere. Some Lithuanian politicians opposed the view that all Jews had to belong to their communities. They confirmed that there were Jews who did not wish to belong to any communities. During one government session the minister of Jewish affairs Soloveichik responded to these statements with a remark that the organizational principle of the Jewish community was the same as that of the Lithuanian one (i.e., national). "There are no cosmopolitans in the world now," stated Soloveichik. It was Voldemaras who found a way out of the situation by suggesting the adoption of the temporary law. If it did not justify itself, it could be revoked. The law was spurred, because the minister of Jewish affairs, Soloveichik had to go to Paris to take part in a congress of Jewish Zionists.⁷³ Some Lithuanian politicians believed that the implementation of Jewish autonomy would not only raise the prestige of the Republic of Lithuania in the eyes of the world Jewry, but also precipitate the process of recognition of the state. Incidentally, the question of putting the temporary law into perspective was finally solved by the end of March, when a special instruction on the implementation of the law was issued.

In addition, the Congress proved that Jews were ready for active participation in the elections to the Constituent Seimas. Also worth noting is the circumstance that the Congress formed its organs (the council), which could contribute to the mobilization of the Jewish community, stimulate

its activity and perhaps even become a kind of organizational center of the elections to the Seimas.⁷⁴

There was quite extensive coverage of the Congress and its work in the Lithuanian press, and the tone of the majority of all the articles was quite favorable and even congenial. Unfortunately, critical and angry publications appeared as well. Jews were accused of being closed and dissatisfied that the elections were held on a Saturday.⁷⁵ There was discontent about the Jews not speaking Lithuanian and preferring Russian to the state language, which irritated Lithuanian peasants. In general it was confirmed that Jews, like Poles, were unwilling to participate in the building of the state and did not understand their responsibilities to the country. There were doubts if they [Jews] could be trusted.⁷⁶ (Similar publications could be found in the official newspaper and the Christian Democratic newspaper *Laisvė*.)

As the elections were approaching, the tone of the publications became more militant, and *threats that Jews might receive a disproportionate number of votes in the elections* appeared in the press more frequently. At the end of March, the *Lietuva* wrote that Lithuanians had many different election ballots, while the Jews had only one and were going to vote for it unanimously. In this way, the Lithuanian votes would become “scattered,” while the Jews “might receive up to 30 percent of the votes.” If this happened, “the country would be incorrectly represented,” and a national minority would have the majority.⁷⁷ On the eve of the elections, the *Lietuva* published an article urging peasants to become more active in the elections. To make it more convincing, threats were used: if peasants were as passive as they had been during the municipal elections, Poles and Jews who lived in cities and submitted just one ballot would vote for it. In this way, burghers, Poles, and Jews would win the elections. And such results might have a negative effect on Lithuanians, as the burghers, Jews, and Poles “would shift all taxes to peasants.”⁷⁸ (There were rumors that taxes might be increased or additional taxes might be imposed because of the low activity of inhabitants.) In the same issue of the newspaper, a proclamation entitled “The Final Hour is Coming,” encouraging active participation in the elections, was published. The author of the proclamation writing under the pseudonym of Officer stated, “All Lithuanians, particularly villagers ... should vote exclusively for the ballots of Lithuanian candidates, as if we don’t do this, foreigners will take power in our land.” If this happened, the struggle for independence would be obsolete.

The press was not the most effective instrument of election protest, because for the larger part of Lithuanian inhabitants, peasants in particular, the press was hardly accessible due to various reasons and thus could not

be an important factor determining the electors' behavior. Protest meetings held by various political parties in the provinces might have had more influence. The course of such meetings and the ensuing conflicts were occasionally covered by the press (both left-wing and right-wing).⁷⁹ It should be noted that the struggle among various Lithuanian political parties was the predominant subject in this coverage. There was no information about the "Jewish issue" being raised in any form. Finally, an important and popular form of election protest was various proclamations. They were distributed in the provinces, though their print-run and spread is not exactly known. In several of such proclamations, whose authorship is attributed to the Christian Democratic Party (CDP), the threat of Jews was exploited.⁸⁰ The newspaper *Darbas* wrote about one of such proclamation titled "The Lithuanian Catholic." It drew the newspaper's attention because the Socialist Populists and other left-wing political forces were represented as "sold out to Jews, and Jews were shown as the culprits of all disasters in Lithuania."⁸¹ Such formulations could be an interpretation of the newspaper correspondent, but the essence of the proclamation may hardly have been distorted. Another proclamation titled "Lithuanian Citizens," testified to the fact that the CDP threatened the electors with "Jewish rule." The proclamation urging to actively participate in the elections read, "Everybody must go to the elections. If you don't go to the elections, Jews and Poles will rule Lithuania. One vote that you fail to give can ruin Lithuania. Who doesn't vote will kill the homeland," and finally, those who did not vote "might unwillingly become flunkies to Poles or Bolsheviks."⁸² For the sake of justice it should be noted that the left-wing parties were also actively attacked. (Proclamations of ideological rather than national nature were undoubtedly more numerous and prevalent.)⁸³

To generalize, it can be stated that the aforementioned examples show a certain tendency typical of the fledgling Lithuanian political and state consciousness—the fear that the national minorities, including the Jews, might receive many votes in the elections thanks to their activity and good organization, and the circumstance could be potentially dangerous to the national Lithuanian state.

Conclusions

While opening the first session of the Constituent Seimas, its chairman A. Stulginskis described the election results in the following way, "The nature of the elections cannot be left unmentioned. Our opponents pro-

claimed for the entire world that Lithuanians did not have any political consciousness, ... that Lithuania was a kind of mixture of nations, and it was not clear which one should have the leading role. The elections to the Seimas revealed a totally different situation. More than 90 percent of the citizens took part in the elections, and such a high percentage rarely occurs anywhere in the world... It means that our people do have a well-developed political consciousness. The election results show that Lithuanians received 91.1 percent votes, Jews received 5.3 percent, Poles received 2.6 percent, and Germans received 0.9 percent. This most clearly demonstrates that Lithuania is not a mixture of nations, but a well-consolidated country of the single Lithuanian nation." In fact, Stulginskis described the essence of the elections to the Constituent Seimas: it was a referendum, in which Lithuanians almost unanimously spoke for national statehood. One can wonder how Stulginskis would have addressed the newly elected deputies, had the elections taken place in all electoral districts, as was required by the election law.

Several conclusions and generalizations can be made. First, it is practically impossible to estimate precisely and reliably the activity of electors to the Constituent Seimas, as the total number of citizens is unknown, and the number of persons with the right to vote and eligibility for Lithuanian citizenship (and seeking it) cannot be calculated. It should be noted that the total number of persons included in the election lists is also unknown. In general, one can affirm that the view that the electors' participation rate was very high and supposedly reached more than 90 percent, which has long been established in the Lithuanian historical consciousness and historiography, has only a symbolic significance (i.e., it should be regarded as a declaration of Lithuanian national and democratic statehood). Second, the analysis of the circumstances of compiling the election lists proves that they could not have been precise. Finally, it can be assumed that while compiling the electors' lists, not only mistakes, but also bias was not avoided. It can be concluded that the bias might have been influenced also by the negative attitude of Lithuanians to the role of the national minorities in the building of their national state.

Several points can be made with regard to the Jews' participation in the elections to the Constituent Seimas. First, only the number of Jews who participated in the elections is known, but it is impossible to establish even approximately how many Jews with the right to vote and eligibility for Lithuanian citizenship lived in Lithuania at that time. Second, part of Lithuanians thought that Jews, because of their good organization and national solidarity, might have received a disproportionate number of

votes in the elections to the Constituent Seimas, which would pose a threat to the national Lithuanian state. These tendencies were reflected in the public space—the press and the election protest. Third, the spread of these tendencies and their impact on the behavior and activity of electors can have different interpretations. Fourth, the circumstance that in the election period there were no serious excesses and clashes between Lithuanians and Jews deserves a separate mention.

NOTES

- 1 A. Pirmininko, "Stulginskio kalba. Pirmasis Steigiamojo Seimo posėdis," *Lietuva*, 19 May 1920, no. 108.
- 2 *Lietuvos statistikos metraštis, of 1924–1926* (Kaunas: Centralinis statistikos biuras, 1927), p. 76.
- 3 It should be noted that the historian's figures are derived from the data of the 1923 census, by subtracting the number of those who did not turn twenty-one years old by 1920 from the general population rate, and by adding the number of adults who died between 1920 and 1923; see S. Noreikienė, "Buržuazinės partijos seimų rinkimuose buržuazinio parlamentinio režimo Lietuvoje metais (1920–1926). Steigiamojo Seimo rinkimai," *LTSR Mokslų Akademijos darbai, serija A*, 1978, no. 1 (62), p. 96.
- 4 V. Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė, *Lietuvos Steigiamasis Seimas* (New York: Tautos fondas, 1975), pp. 23–32.
- 5 P. Čepėnas, *Naujųjų laikų Lietuvos istorija*, vol. 2 (Vilnius: Litanus, 1992), pp. 657–680.
- 6 M. Maksimaitis, *Seimai tarpukario Lietuvoje, Lietuvos Seimas* (Vilnius: Justitia, 1996), pp. 113–130; M. Maksimaitis, *St. Vansevičius, Lietuvos valstybės ir teisės istorija* (Vilnius: Justitia, 1997), pp. 136–138.
- 7 L. Truska, *Steigiamasis Seimas ir jo vieta naujųjų laikų Lietuvos istorijoje; Didysis Lietuvos parlamentarų žodynas*, vol. 2; *Lietuvos Steigiamojo seimo (1920–1922 metų) narių biografinis žodynas* (Vilnius: Vilniaus pedagoginio universiteto leidykla, 2006), p. 29.
- 8 The most significant collection of archived documents—the material of the CEC of the Constituent Seimas—did not survive. According to the law, as soon as the Constituent Seimas came into operation, all the material held by the Election Committee had to be given over to the Seimas. Unfortunately, we do not know if and how it was done. Lithuanian historiography does not contain any mention of it either.
- 9 The documents of state institutions of the Republic of Lithuania held in the Lithuanian Central State Archive (*Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas—LCVA*), as well as the Lithuanian press, were widely used in the present research.
- 10 A tendency to consider the issue of Jewish participation in the elections of the so-called Constituents as peripheral and not having a major influence on the course and results of the elections is typical of historiographies of the neighboring countries. They often contain statements about the marginalized role of Jews, determined by the fact that Jewish political groups did not agree among themselves, were divided, etc. See for example,

- the studies by Polish historians, *Historia Polski*, ed. T. Jędruszczyk (Warsaw: PWN, 1984), vol. 4, prt. 1, pp. 189–198; Cz. Brzoza, *Wielka Historia Polski*, vol. 9, (Cracow: Fogra oficyna wydawnicza, 2001), p. 92. A similar situation occurred in Latvia, where the activity of national minorities was purportedly low. In Latvia Jewish political groups received 5 percent of the votes, which approximately corresponded with the number of Jews in Latvia. *Gadsmīta Latvijas Vesture, t. 2: Neatkarīga valsts 1918–1940* (Riga: Latvijas Vestures institūta apgads, 2003), p. 152; *Istorijs Latvijas XX gadsimts* (Riga: Jumava, 2005), pp. 138–141.
- 11 D. Levin, *Trumpa žydų istorija Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: V. Burdenkovo KF, 2000), pp. 79–80; S. Atamukas, *Lietuvos žydų kelias* (Vilnius: Alma littera, 2001); A. Bliuminas, *Žydų frakcija Lietuvos Seimuose 1920–1927 m.* (Vilnius: Sapnų sala, 2003); L. Truska does not mention Jewish participation in the elections altogether; see L. Truska, *Lietuviai ir žydai nuo XIX a. pabaigos iki 1941 m. birželio* (Vilnius: Vilniaus pedagoginio universiteto leidykla, 2005). For more on Jewish participation in the elections of the Constituent Seimas see Š. Liekis, *A State Within State? Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania, 1918–1925* (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2003), pp. 144–151.
 - 12 In Lithuanian historiography, the issue of the genesis of the declaration was addressed by Š. Liekis, *A State Within State?* pp. 122–127. The author of the declaration was a member of the Lithuanian delegation at the Paris Conference, the deputy minister of foreign affairs Shimshon Rosenboim. After lengthy discussions and corrections, the entire Lithuanian delegation approved the declaration. According to the minister of internal affairs and the chairman of the CEC P. Leonas, the cabinet of ministers were not informed about the adoption of this document. P. Leonas, *My Memories and Experiences (1919–1926)*, Lietuvos Mokslų Akademijos Vrublevskių bibliotekos Rakasčių skyrius (The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences Manuscripts Department—LMAVB RS), f. 117, b. 1080, l. 19–20.
 - 13 S. Kaubrys, “Tautinių mažumų dalyvavimas rinkimuose į Lietuvos Respublikos Seimą 1920–1926 m.; kiekybinių charakteristikų projekcija,” in *Parlamento studijos. Mokslo darbai* (Vilnius: Seimo leidykla, 2005), pp. 127–129. Incidentally, the Jewish Popular Union submitted its candidates in all six electoral districts. The Union received the most votes in the Kaunas second district.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 129–131. Though in the elections of the First Seimas more electors voted for the Jewish political parties than in the elections of the Constituent Seimas, they had fewer representatives in the parliament. This was because of the changes in the election law.
 - 15 The first news about the formation of the commission for preparing the election law appeared in the press at the end of May. See *Lietuva*, 24 May 1919, no. 110. As was confirmed in the chapter, the commission “will be formed,” and “representatives of the administration and political parties will be included in it.” It was also noted that the convening of the Constituent Seimas could not be delayed, as the majority of the nations of the former Russian empire had already convened their constituents. An important circumstance—elections of the Constituent Sejm—was organized in Poland (in the territory of the Commonwealth, except the northeastern districts, and western Galicia) in January 1919. On February 16, elections were organized in the Suwałki district as well. See *Historia Polski*, ed. by Tadeusza Jędruszczyk (Warsaw: PWN, 1984), vol. 4, pt. 1, pp. 189–198; Cz. Brzoza, *Wielka historia Polski*, 2001, vol. 9, pp. 89–92. In his diary, Mykolas Römeris writes at length about the holding of elections in the Łomża district. See M. Römeris, *Dienoraštis 1918–1919 m.* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2007).

- 16 The Cabinet of Ministers adopted a decision to establish a commission for preparing the election law on 18 May 1919. It also had to approve the structure of the commission; see a letter of the Kaunas administrative board to the commission of the CEC, 23 May 1919, LCVA, f. 377, ap. 9, b. 6, l. 14. Also see a letter of the chairman of the commission P. Leonas to the prime minister, 2 June 1919, LCVA, f. 377, ap. 9, b. 6, l. 25; List of the members of the commission, b. d., LCVA, f. 377, ap. 9, b. 5, l. 1.
- 17 Both Polish representatives M. Junowicz and K. Błażewicz actively protested for this approach, but the other members of the commission, including the Jewish representatives, did not support them. Minutes of the session of the commission for preparing the law of the elections of the Constituent Seimas, no. 12, 11 August 1919, LCVA, f. 377, ap. 9, b. 5, l. 10. The final version of the project included a statement that the CEC should consist of five members appointed by the government. The government formed the CEC on 12 December 1919. P. Leonas was appointed its chairman, and it included a Jewish and a Polish representative. L. Garfunkel represented the Jews, and A. Brzozowski represented the Poles.
- 18 *Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios*, 2 December 1919, no. 16. The law stated that the sessions of the Constituent Seimas should be held “when no less than one half plus one of its members have assembled, with the exception of those places where the elections could not take place.”
- 19 Chairman of the CEC, P. Leonas complained to the Prime Minister E. Galvanauskas that with martial law having been lifted, military commandants tried to hinder the election protests by all means possible. Leonas’ letter to the Prime Minister, 12 March 1920, LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 94, l. 32.
- 20 Minutes of the session of the Committee of Ministers, 1920 April 14, LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 86, l. 165–165ap.
- 21 *Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios*, 2 December 1919, no. 16.
- 22 *Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios*, 26 July 1919, no. 9. It was stated in the law that “the borders of the occupied districts” would be established later.
- 23 Č. Laurinavičius, *Lietuvos Sovietų Rusijos taikos sutartis* (Vilnius: Valstybinis leidybos centras, 1992), pp. 97–109.
- 24 Ibid., pp. 103–104; Č. Laurinavičius, *Politika ir diplomatija* (Kaunas: Naujas lankas, 1997), pp. 272–275. According to Laurinavičius’s calculation, in the territory of Lithuania projected by Klimas, according to the data of 1897, Lithuanians would have constituted approximately 54 percent of the population; Klimas considered another 30 percent of the population as assimilated Lithuanians.
- 25 Č. Laurinavičius, *Lietuvos – Sovietų Rusijos*, p. 105.
- 26 Information of the CEC, *Lietuva*, 5 February 1920, no. 28.
- 27 *Laikinosios vyriausybės žinios*, 4 March 1920, no. 20. Information about how many delegates each district was going to send to the Constituent Seimas was published in the newspaper *Lietuva* on the same day, though only the number of delegates from six districts controlled by the Lithuanian administration was indicated. See *Lietuva*, 4 March 1920, no. 51.
- 28 Letter of the committee preparing the law of the elections of the Constituent Seimas to district committees, 1 July 1919, LCVA, f. 377, ap. 9, b. 14, l. 1. At the end of July, the committee sent out the letter again.

- 29 List of electoral districts with an indication of the number of inhabitants and centers, bd., LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 1402, l.2; list of Lithuanian districts with an indication of the number of inhabitants, bd. [August 1919] LCVA, f. 377, ap. 9, b. 14, l. 49–49ap.
- 30 The budget of the Chief committee of the elections of the Constituent Seimas, bd. LCVA, f. 379, ap. 2, b. 202, l. 31–31ap; the budget of the CEC, 15 January 1920, LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 94, l. 3–3ap.
- 31 Judging from the surviving election lists, in which the total number of inhabitants and electors was indicated, the percent of persons having the right to vote was considerably smaller and fluctuated from 52 to 56 percent. Only several lists of this kind have been found. Election lists of the Šiauliai electoral districts, bd., LMAVB RS, f. 76–4, f. 76–5, f. 76–6.
- 32 Records of the committee for preparing the draft law of the elections of the Constituent Seimas nos. 14 and 15, 16 August 1919 and 20 08 1919, LCVA, f. 377, ap. 9, b. 5, l. 13 ap, 15–15ap.
- 33 Records of the committee for preparing the draft law of the elections of the Constituent Seimas no. 16, 24 08 1919, LCVA, f. 377, ap. 9, b. 5, l. 17–18.
- 34 There are some data proving that the Ministry of Home Affairs commissioned the State Printing House to produce 3,000,000 “passports of Lithuanian citizens.” See the letter of the administrator of the Lithuanian Press Bureau to the head of the Lithuanian Press Bureau, 25 June 1919, LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 71, l. 306.
- 35 Letter of the minister of home affairs to the heads of districts, 22 April 1920, LCVA, f. 1021, ap. 1, b. 15, l. 44. The minister informed the heads of districts about the amendment to the law of passports, according to which the term of issuing new passports was extended until May 31.
- 36 St. Šilingas, “Kuriamojo seimo rinkimų įstatymas” in *Tauta*, 25 November 1919, no. 2.
- 37 Letter of the CEC to the administrative board of the Šiauliai district, 23 January 1920, LCVA, f. 862, ap. 1, b. 9, l. 28.
- 38 Letter of the head of the Panevėžys district to the administrative boards of the rural districts, 25 February 1920, LCVA, f. 404, ap. 1, b. 11, l. 162.
- 39 The surviving election lists show that they were not corrected and supplemented once. Lists of inhabitants of the Šiauliai electoral districts “with the right to vote,” bd, LMAVB RS f. 76, b. 4, f. 76, b. 5, f. 76, b. 6, f. 76, b. 7, f. 76, b. 10. List of the citizens of Biržai with full rights, including the right to vote, bd, LCVA, f. 1600, ap. 1, b. 7.
- 40 Letter of the Šiauliai electoral districts to the CEC, 02 04 1920, LCVA, f. 862, ap. 1, b. 9, l. 67, l. 76.
- 41 Letter of the CEC, 16 March 1920, LCVA, f. 1362, ap. 1, b. 11, l. 8; emphasis added.
- 42 Rinkikas [?] “Į Steigiamąjį Seimą. Reikia kas daryti,” *Lietuva*, 11 March 1920, no. 57; “Į Steigiamąjį Seimą,” *Lietuva*, 14 March 1920, no. 60. The socialist-populist newspaper *Darbas* wrote about the incorrectly compiled election lists, omitted Lithuanian electors and their distorted surnames, 18 April 1920, no. 28.
- 43 Minutes from the meeting of the chairmen of the election committees of the rural districts of the Šiauliai district, 31 March 1920, LCVA, f. 862, ap. 1, b. 9, l. 64–64ap.
- 44 Letter of the Kaišiadorys Jewish community to the electoral committee of the Kaišiadorys district (in Russian and Lithuanian), 16 April 1920, LCVA, f. 620, ap.1, b.16, l. 38–38ap.
- 45 List of the citizens of Biržai with full rights bd., LCVA, f. 1600, ap. 1, b. 7, l. 30.

- 46 Letter of the administrative board of the Biržai rural district to the head of the Pasvalys district, December 1919 (?), LCVA, f. 400, ap. 1, b. 31, l. 49.
- 47 There was a similar situation in the town of Marijampolė. There, 4,363 electors were included in the lists for the elections of the Seimas, and according to the data of the census, 17,277 persons lived in Marijampolė in 1923. See a letter of the CEC to the administrative board of the town of Marijampolė, 10 April 1920, LCVA, f. 1362, ap. 1, b. 11, l. 14 ap.
- 48 R. Skipitis, *Nepriklausomą Lietuvą statant* (Chicago: Terra, 1961), p. 265. The author does not indicate the sources from which he obtained this information.
- 49 L. Truska, *Lietuviai ir žydai*, p. 57. The same number is indicated by other authors (e.g., A. Bliuminas and Š. Liekis), while S. Atamukas states that approximately 100,000 Jews were deported. It remains unclear from which territory this number of persons was deported. It is also unknown how many Jews retreated from the Kaunas and Suwałki *gubernias* as the front was approaching. Finally, the main source for Lithuanian authors was Skipitis' memoirs. The author himself does not indicate where he received this information. (At the end of the nineteenth century, approximately 330,000 Jews lived in the Kaunas and Suwałki *gubernias*, and only in the Kaunas *gubernia*—212,000 Jews, according to the data of the census of 1897.)
- 50 E. Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire. The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 140. According to other authors, 190,000 Jews were deported from the Kaunas and Curonian *gubernias*. See S. Goldin, "Deportatsiia russkoi armiei evreev iz Kovenskoi i Kurlandskoi gubernii (aprel'—mai 1915 g.), in *Evrei v meniaiushchemsia mire*, ed. G. Branover and R. Ferber (Riga: Latvia university, 2005), p. 261.
- 51 Š. Liekis, *A State Within State?* p. 128. The elections were organized in the communities that were registered with the Ministry of Jewish Affairs. The elections were held in seventy-four communities. According to the data of the ministry, in 1919–1920, approximately 60,000 Jews participated in the elections. In Liekis's opinion, this number is obviously too high, as sixty large communities counted 20,000 members, p. 131.
- 52 For a review of literature on the issues of the elections of municipalities and the participation of national minorities in these elections, see A. Morkūnaitė-Lazauskienė, "Interesai ir konfliktai. Vietinės savivaldos kūrimas 1918–1919 metais," in *Darbai ir dienos*, 2003, no. 34, pp. 17–32; *Lietuvos respublikos savivaldybių raida 1919–1920 m.* (Šiauliai University Press, 2007), pp. 117–123.
- 53 A. Shohat, "The Beginnings of Anti-Semitism in Independent Lithuania," *Yad Vashem Studies*, 1958, vol. 2, pp. 7–48.
- 54 A. Morkūnaitė-Lazauskienė, *Lietuvos respublikos savivaldybių raida 1918–1920 m.*, p. 118.
- 55 *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- 56 Report of the Lithuanian Press Office, October 1919, LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 72, l. 46.
- 57 Report of the Lithuanian Press Office, 23 September 1919, LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 72, l. 88, 112, 207.
- 58 Decree (copy) of the council of the Raudondvaris rural district, 24 July 1920, LCVA, f. 379, ap. 2, b. 195, l. 9.
- 59 Circular of the Militia Department of the Ministry of Home Affairs to the heads of districts, 10 May 1920, LCVA, f. 399, ap. 1, b. 652, l. 75.

- 60 Circular of the minister of home affairs P. Leonas no. 41, 16 07 1919, LCVA, f. 400, ap. 1, b. 5,
- 61 A. Morkūnaitė-Lazauskienė, *Lietuvos respublikos savivaldybių raida 1918–1920 m.*, pp. 121–122.
- 62 Minutes of the election committee of Kėdainiai, 12 January 1920, LCVA, f. 379, ap. 1, b. 5, l. 53 ap.
- 63 Letter of the Department of Municipal Offices of the Ministry of Home Affairs to the head of the Kaunas district, 13 January 1920, LCVA, f. 379, ap. 2, b. 195, l. 3.
- 64 In 1919, the Ministry of Jewish Affairs counted at least several “anti-Jewish excesses”—in Saločiai, Radviliškis, Panevėžys, Ukmergė, Anykščiai, and Utena. Officers of the Lithuanian Army were involved in them. See LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 30. Many cases have not been analyzed in more detail, but some of them are discussed in Lithuanian historiography. See V. Vareikis, “Žydų ir lietuvių susidūrimai bei konfliktai tarpukario Lietuvoje,” in *Kai ksenofobija virsta prievarta. Lietuvių ir žydų santykių dinamika XIX a.–XX a. pirmoje pusėje*, ed. by V. Sirutavičius, D. Staliūnas (Vilnius: LII, 2005), pp. 161–162.
- 65 Š. Liekis, L. Miliakova, and A. Polonsky, “Prievarta prieš žydus buvusiose Lietuvos–Lenkijos žemėse,” in *Kai ksenofobija virsta prievarta*, pp. 246–248.
- 66 “Lietuvoje,” *Darbas*, 1 October 1919, no. 9. The elections of the Ukmergė City Council and the Vilkaviškis Committee were covered in a similar way. “Korespondencijos” *Darbas*, 3 March 1920, no. 16; “Korespondencijos,” *Darbas*, 7 March 1920, no. 17, “Vilkaviškis,” *Darbas*, 8 January 1920, no. 1.
- 67 Rinkikas, “Korespondencijos,” *Darbas*, 24 March 1920, no. 22. As was confirmed in the newspaper, Jews would constitute “probably the highest percentage of the voters,” and a larger number of Jews would be elected. “Jews expect to elect thirty to thirty-six deputies to the Seimas in all Lithuania,” wrote a correspondent.
- 68 “Pilieti atlik savo prievoles,” *Lietuva*, 13 April 1920, no. 81.
- 69 Š. Liekis, *A State Within State*, pp. 128–131.
- 70 Circular of the Press Department of the Ministry of Jewish Affairs no. 6, bd, LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 117, pp. 65–69.
- 71 “Žydų bendruomenės suvažiavimas,” *Lietuva*, 3 January 1920, no. 2; *Lietuva*, 10 January 1920, no. 7.
- 72 “Žydų bendruomenės suvažiavimas,” *Lietuva*, 11 January 1920, no. 8.
- 73 Session of the Cabinet of Ministers, 2 January 1920, LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 86, l. 43–44.
- 74 At the beginning of March 1920, the National Jewish Council sent out a telegrams to the communities, which read, “Please make active attempts to check the election lists; we recommend quickly receiving ... copies of the election lists, visiting the homes immediately, and informing the neighboring communities.” See Telegram of the National Jewish Council (in Russian), 5 March 1920, LCVA, f. 620, ap. 1, b. 5, l. 123.
- 75 “Lietuvos žydų bendruomenės suvažiavimui pasibaigus,” *Lietuva*, 25 January 1920, no. 20. One of the leaders of the Jewish community Sh. Rozenbaum responded to these reproaches.
- 76 P. R. “Kitataučiai ir mūsų valdžios įstaigos,” *Laisvė*, 18 January 1920, no. 1; “Žydų rusicizmas Lietuvoje,” *Lietuva*, 1 April 1920, no. 74. The Jewish press responded to these accusations claiming it was not the Jews that should be reproached for not know-

ing the Lithuanian language, but Lithuanians themselves, as the conditions to learn the Lithuanian language were not created. There were no textbooks and teachers.

77 “Dėl renkamųjų sąrašų Kauno gubernijoje,” *Lietuva*, 31 March 1920, no. 73.

78 “Pilieti atlik savo prievoles,” *Lietuva*, 13 April 1920, no. 81.

79 “Mūsų žinios,” in *Socialdemokratas*, 6 May 1920, no. 4; M. Keršys, “Socialistai su valstiečių sąjunga ir rinkimų į Steigiamąjį seimą laisvė,” in *Laisvė*, 9 April 1920, no. 76; also see V. Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė, *Lietuvos Steigiamasis Seimas*, pp. 30–36.

80 On 26 February 1920, a letter of the Bishop of Seinai A. Karosas and the Bishop of Samogitia Pr. Karevičius to believers was announced in churches, which read, “It is important that ... true followers of the teaching of Christ be elected to the Seimas. It would be offensive to God ... if enemies of the teaching of Christ and the Church were sent to the Seimas.”

81 A. R. [?], “Kas jiems pirmiausia rūpi,” *Darbas*, 11 April 1920, no. 26.

82 Proclamation “Lithuanian Citizens,” LMAVB RS, L-A/1842, l. 18.

83 Various proclamations, LMAVB RS, L-A/1842, l. 21, 22, 24, 25, 44.

BETWEEN POLAND AND LITHUANIA: JEWS AND THE VILNIUS QUESTION, 1918–1925

THEODORE R. WEEKS

World War I and the early 1920s were a very turbulent period for East-Central Europe and the city known as Vilna, Wilno, and Vilnius.¹ This chapter focuses on one aspect of the city's history during these years: the position of Vilnius Jews between the demands of two newly-formed would-be nation-states: Lithuania and Poland. Forced by circumstances to take sides in a national conflict that was not their own, the Jews of Vilnius attempted to navigate a diplomatic course between Lithuanian and Polish demands, trying to avoid offending either side. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the Jews' attempts to remain "neutral" simply antagonized the most powerful party in the conflict, the Poles, without achieving any significant concessions or easing tensions between Poles and Jews.

Background: Jews in Vilnius before 1918

Vilnius was incorporated into the Russian empire in 1795 and in the nineteenth century the Russians ruled the city, though the predominant Christian culture remained Polish. In the decades before 1914, Russian-speaking Jewish merchants and professionals became a rarity in Vilnius. Vilnius Jews were much less likely to know Polish and Lithuanian languages. A German rabbi visiting the city in 1881 claimed that in larger cities like Vilnius "all young people already understand the Russian language."² Rabbi Rülff certainly exaggerated the knowledge of Russian among Vilnius Jews, but it seems clear that by the early twentieth century more and more Jews spoke the language, though usually not as their native tongue. It was much less common for Jews in Vilnius to assimilate into Polish culture and very few Vilnius Jews knew Lithuanian.

The pogroms that swept the southwest provinces of the Russian empire (mainly present-day Ukraine) and even to the city of Warsaw did not

reach Vilnius. Historians have not been able to provide an entirely satisfying answer as to why this should be so, but possibly the large number of soldiers stationed here and the vigorous action of the local governor general, Count Eduard Ivanovich Totleben, played an important role. Lithuanian historian Darius Staliūnas also argued that the backwardness of the provinces could have been one factor in preventing “traditional” frictions between Jews and Christians from exploding into full-blown pogroms, but he also points to the actions of the local Russian administration as significant.³ Upon learning of pogroms in the South in April 1881, Totleben dispatched orders to military and civilian authorities warning them to take all possible measures to prevent any clashes between Christians and Jews. If a disturbance broke out, local authorities were ordered to suppress it immediately and inform local military units. If need be, these military units were to aid civilian authorities in re-establishing order.⁴ Whatever the reason, Vilnius and the northwest provinces (present-day Lithuania and Belarus) were spared from the anti-Jewish violence in 1881.

The spread of both Russian and radical ideas among Vilnius’s Jews would increase over the next several decades. In 1897 the Jewish Bund (the first Jewish party combining national [Yiddish] ideology and socialism) would be founded in the city. Five years later, the artisan and Bund sympathizer Hirsh Lekert shot at and wounded the city’s governor, Victor von Wahl, and was executed, thereby becoming a major Bund martyr.⁵ At the same time, more affluent Jews who were likely to speak Russian at home or at least in their business dealings came together to build the opulent “Choral Synagogue,” which opened in 1903. The synagogue, the only one that survived to the present day, was located just outside the traditional Jewish district on the edge of the mainly Russian “new town” (where more affluent and acculturated Jews tended to take up residence).⁶ In the same year that the Choral Synagogue opened, Theodor Herzl visited the city to the excitement of the local Jewish community.⁷ And yet, for all the sympathy among the Jewish community for socialism and various forms of Jewish nationalism, the Russian governor of Vilnius province could still write in his 1903 report that if treated properly, the Jews could form a bulwark for Russian culture and patriotism in the city.⁸ Thus, as the new century dawned, the Vilnius Jewish community remained traditional in its majority, but also exhibited a number of diverse modern tendencies, from socialism to nationalism to acculturation.

All of these tendencies strengthened and accelerated in the decade prior to World War I. Jews were prominent among the demonstrators—and victims—of the strikes and police repressions that occurred during the

turbulent year 1905.⁹ Even after the czarist regime had crushed or driven the revolutionary forces underground, the political landscape had changed radically. For one thing, censorship was now considerably lightened, enabling the publishing of periodicals in Russian, Polish, Yiddish, Lithuanian, and Belarus to arise in the city (before 1905, only Russian periodicals had been allowed). Second, elections to the newly created legislature, the Duma, sharpened ethnic conflict as voting increasingly fell along ethnic lines. In 1906 the Zionist Shmariahu Levin was elected to the first Duma with the help of the liberal Kadet,¹⁰ but no Jews were sent from the city or province of Vilnius to the remaining three Dumas (1907–1917). At the same time, relations between Poles and Jews became increasingly strained, the Poles often accused (with some justice) their Jewish neighbors of not supporting their national cause.¹¹ Such accusations came to a head in 1912 with the election of the Fourth Duma that culminated in a Polish boycott of Jews in Warsaw and other cities of Russian Poland.¹² Thus, before World War I, the relationship between Poles and Jews had become strained.

World War I was a disaster for all inhabitants of Vilnius, but hit the Jews the hardest.¹³ During the beginning of the war, still under Russian rule, the economy was severely disrupted, with an especially negative impact on traders, artisans, and small merchants—mainly Jews in Vilnius. The Russian army's open suspicion of Jews as potential spies and the evacuation of many thousands of Jews to the Russian interior further disrupted life and strained relations with non-Jews. The fact that Russian officials were issuing these evacuation orders and specifically targeting Jews fanned anti-semitic accusations. In late summer of 1915, with the fall of Kaunas, Vilnius Jews lived in fear that they too would be forced to leave their homes. The rapid German advance may have prevented this tragedy.¹⁴

By chance, the Russians pulled out of Vilnius on the eve of the most important holiday in the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur. Jewish educator and writer Zionist Hirsz Abramowicz described the final day of Russian rule: "Almost no one had a thought of attending Kol Nidrei services. People were afraid to appear in the streets... Everyone was so fed up with the persecution, libelous attacks, and high inflation that nearly all of Vilna wished to be rid of the Russians... After midnight on ... September 17 everything was closed up... The night passed almost without ... incident, except for the fear generated by the terrible explosions when bridges and other military targets were demolished."¹⁵

Although both Poles and Jews welcomed the departure of the Russians and the entry of the Germans into Vilnius, occupying the city did not im-

prove conditions. In fact, as Abramowicz recounts, the German desire to control all economic transactions and their confiscations of everything from horses to grain to fruit from orchards further impoverished the local population. Although overall German cultural and political policy was benevolent or at least neutral toward Jews, their economic measures were devastating. By 1917 most of Vilnius's inhabitants were starving.¹⁶ Mortality rates shot up, especially among the youngest and oldest segments of the population.¹⁷ Banditry increased, and it appeared that all resemblance of law and order was breaking down. The German authorities seemed entirely incapable of dealing with the situation and matters were made worse by the terrible harvest of 1916–1917. At the very least, Vilnius had hoped the Germans would succeed in maintaining order, but by late 1917 and 1918 chaos and lawlessness gave the lie to any pretense of German *Ordnung*.¹⁸ Despite the Russian Revolution and harsh treaty of Brest-Litovsk in the spring of 1918, life did not improve in Vilnius. The German capitulation of November 1918 translated into chaos in Vilnius; during the next two years control over the city passed from Lithuanians to Soviets to Poles to Soviets and finally back to the Poles.

The end of the war brought no respite for the suffering population of Vilnius. Khaykl Lunski described 1919 as a year of epidemics and famine, even worse than the war years. In 1914, Lunski noted often hearing cries and weeping, but by 1919 the misery and exhaustion was so great that no one could even cry any more.¹⁹ Hirs Abramowicz describes almost total desolation under Soviet rule in April 1919, "Hunger was pervasive. It was against the law to buy or sell anything... Bread was difficult to find and a bowl of plain soup was also a rarity ... anyone who was able to do so fled Vilnius."²⁰ The Polish seizing of the city from the Bolsheviks in April 1919 was accompanied by a pogrom in which dozens were killed.²¹ Worse yet, in the long run, was the frequent assumption by Poles that the Jewish population supported the Bolsheviks and communist rule.

Wilno nasze—Vilnius mūsų

Before the Germans had withdrawn from Vilnius, both Poles and Lithuanians were claiming the city as their own. The arguments used by the two sides, however, differed greatly, but resembled each other mainly in dogmatism and a firm belief for both Poles and Lithuanians that Vilnius was "theirs." The Poles based their claim on Vilnius partly on recent history, partly on culture, and primarily on politics and the present-day ethnic

makeup of the city. For Poles, Vilnius was associated with Polish romanticism in the first half of the nineteenth century, with the poet Adam Mickiewicz, and with the heroic struggle to keep Polish culture and traditions there alive during the period of Russian repressions after 1863.²² Poles could point out that they formed the largest ethnic group in the city, undeniably by 1919 the majority of the city's population was Polish. When reading contemporary Polish accounts of the liberation—their word—of Vilnius in 1919 (or again in 1920), you would hardly guess that other nationalities inhabited the city.²³

Polish diplomats, for example, argued that Vilnius had never been the capital of an ethnic Lithuanian state (stressing the multiethnic nature of the medieval Lithuanian state and later Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) and that Poles had always dominated in religious life in the city.²⁴ Poles also pointed out that Lithuanian leadership had been too happy to serve the Germans during World War I and later complained of the Lithuanian collaboration with Soviet Russia. This latter accusation was based in particular on the Soviet-Lithuanian Peace Treaty of 12 July 1920 in which the communist state supported Lithuania's claim for Vilnius. The fact that this treaty was signed while Red Army troops were threatening Warsaw did not improve Poles' perceptions of the Lithuanian state.

The rhetoric used by both sides is rather interesting. While denying historical Lithuania as a "national state," a pro-Polish commentator insisted, "The Poland of this epoch [the fourteenth century] was purely national."²⁵ In the same collection it was claimed that, according to the Polish census of 1919, only 2,920 ethnic Lithuanians lived in Vilnius, compared to 72,416 Poles and 46,559 Jews.²⁶ A pamphlet published in French by the distinguished legal scholar, historian, and writer, Stanisław Kutrzeba, summed up the Polish claims for Vilnius (which by that point had been seized by armed forces). First, the Lithuanian position was based on outdated stereotypes and prejudices against Poles (as landlords and exploiters of Lithuanian peasants) that had been encouraged both by the Russian government before 1917 (*divide et impera*) and by the Soviets after the revolution. Second, Vilnius was not and had never been Lithuanian in the ethnic-linguistic sense. Third, during the Soviet-Polish War (1920), the Lithuanians had violated their declared neutrality by aiding the Russians. Fourth, the unwillingness of the Lithuanian government to negotiate in good faith and the fear of Vilnius' population over a renewed Lithuanian military attack had precipitated General Lucjan Żeligowski's "defensive" occupation of the city. Finally, the plebiscite of 1922 had shown overwhelming support for the city's incorporation into Poland.²⁷

These were the main arguments on the Polish side, and the claims would be repeated endlessly both before and after the crucial events of 1920–1922.²⁸

Not all Poles agreed on the precise form in which Vilnius was to be connected to the Polish state. Some, following Józef Piłsudski, preferred a federative structure in which Vilnius and its surroundings would retain some measure of autonomy while retaining a connection to the Polish state and others were in favor of a more direct and centralist connection to Warsaw.²⁹ In the end, these disagreements ended up being rather abstract and detached from actual political realities, in particular of the consistently negative view the Lithuanian government expressed on the possibility of federation.³⁰ When the liberal Belgian foreign minister, Paul Hymans, proposed a federated Lithuania of two cantons (one centered on Kaunas, the other on Vilnius), neither Poles nor Lithuanians would accept the idea.³¹

Lacking a solid ethnic majority in the city and being aware of their political and military weakness vis-à-vis the Poles, the Lithuanians put forth very different arguments to claim Vilnius.³² Since the creation of the modern Lithuanian national movement in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the role of Vilnius as the capital of the future Lithuanian state had been an article of faith. The establishment of the first non-Russian-language daily paper in that city in late 1904 (before any Polish or Yiddish dailies), *Vilniaus Žinios*, and the holding of a “Great Council” of Lithuanian patriotic intelligentsia in the city late the following year were both symbolic events aiming to lay claim to the city as Lithuanian.³³ Despite the lack of ethnic Lithuanians in the city by the early twentieth century, the Lithuanian national movement argued that the city’s past, its founding by the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas in the fourteenth century, and its association with the medieval and early modern state justified their claims to the city. In any case, there was no other obvious candidate for a future capital, Kaunas being too small and in any case inhabited (in 1918) by nearly as many Jews and Poles as Lithuanians. When the Lithuanian Taryba (Council) declared the country’s independence on 16 February 1918, the act was signed in Vilnius and declared the city to be Lithuania’s capital.³⁴

Defenders of the Lithuanian claim to Vilnius tended to stress not the present (a mainly Polish city whose residents clearly did not welcome incorporation into Lithuania) but the past and the future. They stressed that all nationalities would be treated fairly and that even as the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius would not repress the cultures of Poles and Jews. An example of such liberal argumentation may be found in articles written

between 1919 and 1921 by Józef-Albin Herbaczewski, one of the rare individuals who attempted to bridge the Polish-Lithuanian divide. Already before the war, Herbaczewski had written several works attempting to acquaint Poles with Lithuanian culture and national aspirations.³⁵ Immediately following the war, he wrote a series of impassioned articles attempting to influence Polish politicians to find a compromise with the Lithuanians, including in Vilnius, and link forces against the Russians. He wrote about Vilnius, at a time when the city was occupied by the Bolsheviks, that only in this city “two cultures, two civilizations—the West and the East—are engaged in a mortal battle.” Lithuanians and Poles, as representatives of “Roman culture” (a term not more closely defined by Herbaczewski), should join forces against the nihilist tendencies of Soviet Russians and their Jewish supporters. By 1921, Herbaczewski has clearly despaired over any real possibility of Polish-Lithuanian cooperation; his tone became increasingly strident, not to say hysterical, in his final article in the series being entitled, “Polityka bez perspektywy.”³⁶ To be sure, Herbaczewski did not represent any party and had little political influence. However, his efforts to mediate between Polish and Lithuanian claims for Vilnius deserve notice, and his argument of Vilnius as a multiethnic rather than strictly Polish or Lithuanian city exemplified one important line of Lithuanian rhetoric claiming the city.

Lithuanian national activist and writer Mykolas Biržiška similarly stressed the multiethnic population of Vilnius and insisted that “nobody doubts” in independent and democratic Lithuania. There could be “no question of forcible Lithuanianization or persecution of the Polish, Belarussian, Yiddish, etc., languages”—except on the part of individuals prejudiced against the Lithuanian state and arguing in bad faith.³⁷ Publishing in both Lithuanian and Polish, Biržiška argued that “Lithuanian” identity could not be based simply on one’s native language. Rather, this identity could include speakers of various languages who would live together in harmony in the future Lithuanian capital. Along these lines Biržiška points out that while in Vilnius all street signs were in Polish, in Kaunas such signs also appeared in Polish and Yiddish as well as Lithuanian.³⁸ After Poland occupied the city in October 1920, Biržiška’s tone became increasingly strident, in particularly in his Lithuanian-language publications. His *Vilniaus Golgotha* (the title is a good indication of the book’s contents) takes Lithuanian claims on Vilnius for granted and provides a blow-by-blow chronology of attempts to keep Lithuanian culture alive in the city while the Poles appear as pogromists, repressive bureaucrats, and aggressive policemen.³⁹

After the Vilnius question had been settled—at least for the moment—in the mid-1920s, an exchange of views by a Polish scholar and a Lithuanian-French poet again reveal some of the main differences in outlook. The titles of the two essays, both published in the respected French periodical, *Le Monde slave*, are also indicative of the diverse approaches: moderate socialist and Pilsudski-supporter Leon Wasilewski chose to call his article “Wilno et la civilisation polonaise,” while Oscar Miłosz (Oskaras Milašius) countered with “Vilna et la civilisation européenne.” Wasilewski’s article was first published, and presented a familiar historical overview of the city as deeply Polish for centuries, by a Polish university and anti-Russian resistance movement in the nineteenth century. Wasilewski further argued, that despite all of the government’s russification efforts, the city remained Polish up to the Great War. Wasilewski does not mention Lithuanians prior to the last page of the article, in which he writes that “the Lithuanians remained the theoretical suzerains of Wilno [Vilnius] until 9 October 1920 when the Polish general Żeligowski entered the city, chasing out the Bolshevik troops.”⁴⁰ In this way Wasilewski not only dismisses Lithuanian claims on the city but equates them with the Bolsheviks.

In his response nearly a year later, the French-Lithuanian poet Oscar Miłosz remarked on the “oceans of ink” that had been spilled over this question in the past six years and his reluctance to add to these polemics. And yet he felt it important to counter Wasilewski and present the Lithuanian view. The weak position of the Lithuanian state, Miłosz pointed out, was apparent to all of its citizens who sincerely desired better relations with Poland. But since 1918 Warsaw had shown an aggressive disregard for Lithuanian sensibilities and refused to adopt a constructive attitude toward any kind of serious compromise with Lithuania. Miłosz stressed the ancient character of the Lithuanian language, as well as the democratic and liberal character of the Lithuanian republic. In closing, the poet rejected Wasilewski’s statement that Żeligowski had liberated the city from the Bolsheviks. He quoted Belgian politician Paul Hymans that the main obstacle to solving the Vilna problem was the presence of Żeligowski’s troops in the city. Moreover, he insinuated that the pro-Polish results of the 1922 plebiscite were due to the presence of “50,000 Polish soldiers” in the region.⁴¹ Typically, the present-day ethnic-linguistic makeup of the city plays no role in Miłosz’s argumentation, which furthermore ignores the city’s Jewish community entirely. By the time Miłosz wrote his essay (1926), Vilnius was firmly under Polish control and no one could reasonably expect the Poles to relinquish the city without a major cataclysm.

Żeligowski and “Middle Lithuania,” 1920

The name of General Lucjan Żeligowski has been frequently mentioned in the arguments both for and against incorporating Vilnius into the Polish state. Żeligowski was a native of this region, born in the nearby town of Oszmiana. He had served as an officer in the czarist army and during World War I helped organize Polish units in the East, serving with distinction in the Polish-Soviet War of 1920. During this period he had also become a trusted confidant of Marshall Józef Piłsudski.

During the twenty months between December 1918 and late September 1920 Vilnius had experienced a number of occupations: by Poles, Lithuanians, and Soviets.⁴² The Poles had been forced to pull out of the city in July 1920 in the context of the Soviet Russia march on Poland. The city was first taken by the Red Army (on 14 July 1920), then handed over to the Lithuanians a month later. In September 1920 the Lithuanian authorities were scrambling to set up ministries and other institutions in Vilnius to strengthen their case before the League of Nations while resident Poles feared another Bolshevik incursion into the city.⁴³ It was in this atmosphere, and after consulting with Piłsudski, that Żeligowski decided to occupy the city militarily. His troops took the city unopposed on 9 October 1920. Soon afterward he set up the state of “Litwa Środkowa” (Middle Lithuania), which clearly was a temporary formation aimed simply at allowing the authorities in Warsaw to deny complicity in Żeligowski’s “rebellion.”⁴⁴

Given the provisional character of “Middle Lithuania” and the non-democratic, military nature of its creation, elections needed to be called quickly and would be of major importance for the territory’s future. On 12 October 1920 Żeligowski declared himself the territory’s “commander in chief” (Naczelny Dowódca) but promised that any decrees issued by him would have to be ratified *post facto* by Middle Lithuania’s legislature (Sejm Ustawodawczy) upon its convocation. At length the date for elections was set for 8 January 1922. From late 1920 throughout 1921 Żeligowski and the Polish administration of “Middle Lithuania” did all they could to pursue all inhabitants of the territory to participate in the elections. From the start, Lithuanians seemed unlikely to participate—both the Kaunas government and local Lithuanian intellectuals, such as Mykolas Biržiška, called for a boycott of what they regarded as an illegal election. There was hope, however, that the Jews could be persuaded to vote and the authorities of Middle Lithuania went out of their way to flatter potential Jewish voters during this period.

Żeligowski was known to have a positive reputation among Jews and had not been connected with anti-Jewish violence that had unfortunately not been a rare occurrence among Polish troops over the past two years. The general's "#1 order" did not specifically favor any one nationality, stating simply that the "savage Bolshevik hordes" had been expelled from the city and that an elected legislature would decide the territory's fate.⁴⁵ Although Żeligowski's most obvious constituency was the Poles, it was important for "Middle Lithuania" to avoid any appearance of anti-semitism. Thus, Jewish commentators agree that policy toward the Jews during 1920–1922 was "soft" and that Żeligowski and other officials of "Middle Lithuania" tried to coax Jews over to their side.⁴⁶

At the same time, the Lithuanian state had shown a favorable attitude toward its Jewish citizens from the start, going further than any other European country in not only granting equal rights to Jews, but cultural autonomy and even a minister of Jewish affairs.⁴⁷ As we have seen in the years leading up to World War I, Polish-Jewish relations had become very strained; Lithuanians, on the other hand, had remained fairly neutral on the Jewish question (their main national rival being the Poles). From the Jewish point of view, the Polish record was further spoiled, by the apparent reluctance of the newly formed Polish state (and Polish public) even to agree to the minority rights' treaty demanded by the allies at the Paris Peace talks in 1919. The memory of pogroms in Lwów (November 1918), Vilnius (April 1919), and elsewhere further tarnished the image of Poles among Jews.⁴⁸ Although many Jews recognized that only a minority of Poles had participated in or approved of such excesses, the fear that the Polish state would not be willing or capable of protecting its non-Polish citizens was widespread.⁴⁹ On the other hand, this fear also made Jews hesitate before taking any actions that might provoke their Polish neighbors, such as openly supporting Lithuania claims to Vilnius.

There is considerable evidence that many Vilnius Jews would have preferred that the city be passed to Lithuanian hands, but few declared this position openly, probably for fear of antagonizing the Poles.⁵⁰ For example, Jakub Wygodzki noted in his memoirs that the previously neutral policy adopted by Jews toward the occupying powers (from the Germans on) needed to be changed to one of active support for the Lithuanians once they had taken Vilnius and spoke of the situation of Jews in "Kovno-Lita" as "paradise" (*gan eden*). However, once the city was back in Polish hands a much more cautious approach was again the order of the day.⁵¹ Earlier, before Żeligowski's occupying of Vilnius made a non-Polish future for the city very unlikely, Jewish leaders from Vilnius—including

Wygodzki and Dr. Tsemah Szabad—expressed support for a closer connection to Kaunas and stated that all Lithuanian Jews should be brought together. Szabad was also quoted as arguing that while in Poland, Jews would form a small minority among the Poles—Lithuanian Jews felt that they belonged to this land and wished to remain here (i.e., also under Lithuanian sovereignty). Although these statements come from Lithuanian government sources and can be biased, it seems unlikely that they would have been invented (these documents were for internal use, not for propaganda purposes). In any case, the arguments for a closer connection to Kaunas were both logical and consistent with what we knew about Jewish attitudes in Vilnius at the time.⁵²

By December 1920, according to a “Middle Lithuanian” internal report, Jewish political life was returning to normal. At a meeting of the Jewish community, its president Dr. Wygodzki spoke of the “inordinately positive impression” (*nadzwyczajne mile wyrażenie*) that General Żeligowski had made on him, but also stressed that both Poles and Jews must work together in preventing any further excesses and toward improving mutual relations. The Poles must respect the terms of the Versailles Treaty (here Wygodzki was referring most likely to the rights for national minorities guaranteed there). Wygodzki also explained to those assembled “about the formation of Middle Lithuania” and spoke about federation—though from the vague mention in this report it is not clear just what he meant: federation with Lithuania? Like Wygodzki, Vilnius Chief Rabbi Yitshak Rubinstein mentions recent violence against Jews in and around the city, stressing that this violence had been caused by agitation on the part of “some secret organization” (that is, not by direct orders of the Polish authorities). All speakers stressed the need to work with the authorities in schools and in the press to combat antisemitism.⁵³

Throughout 1921 the future of Vilnius and the upcoming elections to the Vilnius Sejm were a continual topic in the city’s press. *Unzer Tog* tended to emphasize the Lithuanian connection and *Najer morgen* the Polish—polemics between the two papers continued throughout the year.⁵⁴ But the fundamental positions of both were not, perhaps, so terribly far apart. In December 1920 *Unzer Tog* expressed its support that “Vilnius and the entire country remain Lithuania” with equal rights for all four nationalities living there. But the same sentence emphasized the need to protect Polish culture and to prevent Lithuanians from ruling over regions where they did not constitute the majority of the population.⁵⁵ This was an obvious contradiction since nobody argued that Lithuanians were in the majority either in Vilnius proper or in “Middle Lithuania” as a whole.

In an article in *Unzer Tog* in the late 1920s, Dr. Szabad, expressed the hope that the Vilnius question could be solved at the (Paris) Peace Conference and outlined a cantonal plan, similar to that of Huymans, that could possibly satisfy both sides. The problem with incorporating Vilnius into Poland, Szabad argued, was that "Poland is the state of Poles by race and religion," while Jews would be better served in a "state of nations" in which no one national group dominated. Szabad warned, that unless the upcoming elections were held in a fair manner throughout the territory of Middle Lithuania, Jews would not be able to participate.⁵⁶

This cautious profederation (or pro-Lithuania, depending on one's interpretation) position was not the only one to be encountered. A strong pro-Polish line was also to be found, in particular, in *Najer Morgen*. One of its arguments was that an "artificial wall" between Vilnius Jews and Warsaw would mean cutting them off from Polish Jewry which, would be a "catastrophe."⁵⁷ *Najer Morgen* further argued that Poles and Jews had fought together against Russian repression at various moments in the nineteenth century as well as in the Polish Legions during World War I. Although Jews did speak a different language and thus needed autonomous schools, their fate was inextricably linked with Poland. But in March 1921 the paper indicated that a confederation between Poland and Lithuania might still be possible, thereby allowing Vilnius Jews to enjoy the best of both worlds.⁵⁸ Although this hope soon faded, *Najer Morgen* continued to publish its pro-Polish line, based on shared history/patriotism, practical reasons (the Poles were stronger and more numerous than the Lithuanians), and economic arguments.⁵⁹ *Najer Morgen* also argued that one should not exaggerate the pro-Jewish policies of the Lithuanian government.⁶⁰

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to exactly gauge the attitude of the Vilnius Jewish community toward the prospect of the city's incorporation into Poland.⁶¹ A report from early 1921 claims that Jews suffered terribly under the Polish occupation and did not openly oppose incorporation simply because of their fear of Żeligowski's troops. However, this account found in the files of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry, is simply too anti-Polish and pro-Lithuanian ("The Poles declare that they intend to exterminate the Jews, [sic] should Vilna [Vilnius] not be ceded to Poland... Under the Lithuanian rule ... the Jews of Vilna enjoyed all the privileges of equal citizenship... It is therefore only natural that the Jews ... should wish to vote that Vilna should remain [sic] Lithuanian.") to be taken seriously.⁶² Many Jews probably would have ideally supported incorporation in Lithuania, but the authorities of "Middle Lithuania" were careful to

cater to Jewish sensibilities—president of the Temporary Ruling Commission (the highest civilian authority in Middle Lithuania) Aleksander Meysztowicz even insisted on speaking Yiddish with a Jewish delegation.⁶³ In the end, however, Jews had nothing to gain and much to lose from taking a clear stand either for or against participation in the elections (which, given the Polish majority in “Middle Lithuania,” was equivalent to supporting incorporation into Poland). Thus, in late 1921 the Jewish leadership (of various parties) came out with a neutral declaration not endorsing either participation or boycott. This declaration was probably little more than a diplomatic tactic, an attempt to avoid overtly offending the Poles while recognizing that whether or not Jews openly opposed participation in the plebiscite, the Poles would win the majority of the vote.⁶⁴

An internal report on attitudes of non-Poles toward the plebiscite, as it had come to be known, portrays relations between Poles and Jews with rather shocking openness, “Support for the Polish orientation in the Vilnius question does not lie in the interest of the Jews as all Jews perfectly sense [*wyczuwają*] the antisemitism of all classes [*warstwa*] of Polish society...” Jews would of course prefer to live in a state where they are not the only minority (strangely in these discussions the large Belarusian, Ukrainian, and German minorities in Poland disappear), such as with the incorporation of Lithuania or “on the other hand [through] a direct union with the Jews of Soviet Russia or with Germany.” The report continues, that no Jew forgets they are “at the helm of power” (*u steru rządów*) in Soviet Russia though some prefer a connection with the economically more advanced Germany.⁶⁵ For all its antisemitic tone and prejudices, the report was probably correct at least in its assessment of Jewish misgivings about becoming Polish citizens. Poland clearly tended toward a self-definition as a would-be nation-state of Poles, which could only mean that non-Poles would end up in the category of second-class citizens. But Vilnius Jews no doubt saw the incorporation of their city into Poland as inevitable and, as so many times before in Jewish history, tried to keep their heads down and to avoid exacerbating anti-Jewish feelings among either Lithuanians or Poles.

The Plebiscite, Incorporation, and Aftermath

The elections to the Vilnius Sejm took place, as planned, on 8 January 1922. As expected, while most Poles voted most non-Poles did not. Lithuanians were least likely to go to the polls; official figures showed

that 8.2 percent of rural Lithuanians voted and a mere 1.2 percent of those Lithuanians living in cities (who would be more likely to be connected with the national movement). As for Jews, 15.3 percent of those in rural areas and 6.3 percent of urban dwellers voted. Finally, among Poles 83 percent of urban dwellers and 80.3 percent of those in rural areas voted.⁶⁶ In other words, among more nationally conscious individuals (peasants at this point would almost certainly be less nationally oriented than townspeople), Jews and Lithuanians refrained from voting, while Poles participated. In Vilnius itself 83.6 percent of Christian Poles (but only 75.6% of all Christians; in other words, Lithuanians and Belarusians generally boycotted the elections) voted, as did 60.2 percent of Muslims (a total of sixty-eight individuals), while a total of 303 Jews in the city (1.4%) cast their ballots.⁶⁷ The official view that the Bundists supported participation in the elections, while the Zionists opposed it seems false, given this almost complete rate of nonparticipation.⁶⁸

One individual who had consistently argued in favor of participation in the elections was Warsaw journalist Jakób Kronenberg, editor of *Najer morgen*.⁶⁹ Kronenberg was so disgusted with the results of the elections that he self-published a defense of his position and left Vilnius for Warsaw. In this pamphlet he excoriates the Zionists as backing the boycott and irresponsibly endangering Jews both in Vilnius and throughout Poland. He particularly condemned the Zionist daily *Haint's* attitude toward Żeligowski's "liberation" of the city, when "all of Polish society greeted this deed with joy." For Kronenberg, the anti-Polish campaign was led by the well-known Zionist Dr. Wygodzki, whom he accused of pro-Lithuanian sympathies (which, given Wygodzki's participation in the *Taryba* in 1918, would seem justified). Throughout the election campaign (i.e., 1921), Kronenberg charged, he was subjected to personal attacks and vilification from the Zionists. Kronenberg bemoaned the lost opportunity of the Vilnius Sejm elections, for him an occasion when Poles extended a hand to their Jewish neighbors, only to have "that hand slapped away."⁷⁰

As everyone had expected, the Vilnius Sejm met for just a month, convening on 1 February 1922 and voting to dissolve itself on February 28. On February 20 the Sejm passed its most important law: a request that "Middle Lithuania" be incorporated into the Republic of Poland.⁷¹ On March 2 a delegation from the Vilnius Sejm were in Warsaw to present their request to the Sejm Ustawodawczy of the Republic of Poland where it was accepted on 6 April. On 18 April 1922, the eve of the three year anniversary of the liberation of Vilnius from Soviet rule (but for Jews the occasion of a murderous pogrom), "Middle Lithuania" was officially in-

corporated into the Republic of Poland with ceremonies in the city attended by Piłsudski, Żeligowski, Aleksander Meysztowicz, three bishops, and other dignitaries.⁷²

As we have seen, at least one local official in Vilnius took for granted a high level of antisemitism among Poles in the city and cited this as a reason why Jews would probably not participate in the Sejm elections. This generally negative view toward Jews continued in official reports after the elections. In reports from 1923, Jews are portrayed as at least potentially disloyal and particularly active in leftist parties.⁷³ In 1925, nearly every report mentions that Jews are unhappy with government policies, in particular with the currency reform put through by Minister Władysław Grabski in January 1924 and Grabski's taxation policies. Jews saw both of these as particularly aimed at them (which, in a sense, they were, since they hit small businessmen particularly hard). Other complaints on the part of Jews included the reluctance of the government to help finance Jewish schools (required by the Minorities Treaty). Far from being sympathetic to such complaints, the reports use words like "hostile" and "unreliable" to describe the Jews, making little effort to distinguish between the different groups within Jewish society.⁷⁴ At the same time, Jews continued to participate in city government (*Rada Miejska*) in Vilnius and at least some degree of compromise on practical measures was reached between the Polish and Jewish communities.⁷⁵ On the one hand, a considerable degree of bad feelings between Poles and Jews. On the other hand, at least some degree of cooperation that might, given good will and favorable circumstances, have developed into a greater level of mutual trust and positive relations.

Conclusion

Was Jakób Kronenberg correct? Had Vilnius Jewry passed up a historical occasion for improving their relations with Christian Poles? Unfortunately, there is little evidence of this in published or archival sources. Although the Jews of Vilnius may well have wished for incorporation into the friendly Lithuanian state, this option was almost completely closed after Żeligowski's occupation of Vilnius in October 1920. Vilnius Jews on the whole certainly felt apprehension toward Polish rule, but they also had little to gain by openly supporting Lithuania's case. "Middle Lithuanian" officials' benevolence toward Jews was only apparently aimed at avoiding further international condemnation and, possibly, gaining Jewish support

for the city's incorporation into Poland. Jewish leaders' attempts to find a middle ground between Polish and Lithuanian claims, possibly through a cantonal or federated solution, were doomed to failure by the refusal of either Lithuanian or Polish governments to countenance real compromise. In the end, between 1918 and 1925, the Jews of Vilnius found themselves in the uncomfortable position of having to choose between two mutually exclusive national programs, neither of which was their own.

NOTES

- 1 Throughout the article I use the present-day, Lithuanian, form of the city's name. In this period Jews would have known the city as Vilna/Vilne, Poles as Wilno.
- 2 Dr. J. Rülff, *Drei Tage in Jüdisch-Russland. Ein Cultur- und Sittenbild* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag von J. Kauffmann, 1882), p. 30.
- 3 D. Staliūnas, "Anti-Jewish Disturbances in the North-Western Provinces in the Early 1880s," *East European Jewish Affairs* 34, no. 2 (Winter 2004), pp. 119–138.
- 4 *Lietuvos valstybinis istorijos archyvas* (Lithuanian State Historical Archives) (LVIA), f. 378, PS 1881, b. 52, l. 10–13.
- 5 G. Aronson et al., *Di geshikhte fun Bund* (New York: Farlag unzer tsayt, 1960), I: 107–132 (founding of party), I: 232–240 ("Der heroisher akt fun Hirsh Lekert"). See also H. J. Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia from its Origins to 1905* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972).
- 6 G. Agranovskii and I. Guzenberg, *Litovskii Ierusalim. Kratkii putevoditel' po pamiatnym mestam evreiskoi istorii i kul'tury v Vil'niuse* (Vilnius: Lituanus, 1992), p. 35; L. Ran, *Yerushalayim de Lita/Jerusalem of Lithuania* (New York: Laureate Press, 1974), I: 113–114.
- 7 P. Kon, *Geheimberichte über Herzls Besuch in Wilno im Jahre 1903* (Vienna, 1928); Cohen, *Vilna*, pp. 349–351.
- 8 *Tainaia dokladnaia zapiska Vilenskogo gubernatora o polozhenii evreev v Rossii* (Geneva: Bund, 1904), p. 57. The governor, Count K. K. Palen (Pahlen), did not deny the danger of the Bund but argued that its attractiveness would be considerably diminished if the Russian government were to abolish restrictive measures (the so-called May Laws of 1882). It goes without saying that his liberal suggestions were not accepted by the tsar.
- 9 T. R. Weeks, "The 1905 Revolution in Vilnius," in *Rewolucja 1905–1907 w Królestwie Polskim i w Rosji*, ed. M. Przeniosła and S. Wiech (Kielce: Wydawnictwo Akademii Świętokrzyskiej, 2005), pp. 213–236.
- 10 V. Levin, "Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections, 1906–1907," in *Jews and Slavs*, ed. W. Moskovich (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Center for Slavic Languages and Literatures, 2000), vol. 7, p. 238. Levin competed in this election with a Polish candidate and was supported by Vilnius Jews and Lithuanians, see D. Staliūnas, "Rinkimai į I Rusijos Dūmą Lietuvoje," *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis. 1992* (Vilnius, 1994), pp. 45–66.

- 11 Some time earlier the socialist Stanisław Mendelsohn had warned Jews in Vilnius that by taking on Russian culture, they risked exacerbating Polish culture. But in a city of mixed culture in the Russian empire, it was not illogical that many Jews chose to learn the Russian language. S. Mendelsohn, "Wobec grożącego u nas antysemityzmu," *Przedświt* 39–40 (26 March 1892), pp. 5–8.
- 12 On the boycott, see T. R. Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism: The "Jewish Question" in Poland, 1850–1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), pp. 149–169; and R. Blobaum, "The Politics of Antisemitism in Fin-de-Siècle Warsaw," *Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 2 (June 2001), pp. 275–306.
- 13 A rare but exceedingly valuable source for Jewish Vilnius during World War I is A. Virshuvski, S.-L. Tziton and T. Szabad, *Pinkas far der geshikhte fun vilne in di yorn fun milhome un okupatsie*, Sh. An-Ski, ed. (Vilnius: n.p., 1922).
- 14 Generally on the mass evacuations of civilian populations during World War I, see P. Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). For the situation in the Polish provinces, see K. Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2005). A more specific study of Jewish evacuations from the Baltic region is S. Goldin, "Deportatsiia russkoi armiei evreev iz Kovenskoi i Kurlianskoi gubernii (aprel'–mai 1915 g.)," in G. Branover and R. Ferber, eds., *Evrei v meiniushchemsia mire. Materialy 5-i mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii, Riga, 16–17 sentiabria 2003 g.* (Riga, 2005), pp. 260–265.
- 15 H. Abramowicz, *Profiles of a Lost World: Memoirs of East European Jewish Life before World War II* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), p. 178. This memoir was originally published as *Farshvundene gashtaltn* (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-farband fun poylishe yidn in argentine, 1958), pp. 261–325.
- 16 On the situation in 1916 and 1917, see L. Gira, "Vilniaus gyvenimas po vokiečiais," *Mūsų senovė* 1, no. 2 (1921), pp. 21–38, no. 3 (1922), pp. 410–424.
- 17 According to Minczeles, mortality rates went up from 292 in 1916 to 548 (per 10,000) in 1917 among those under five years old, and from 227 to 621 among those sixty-one to seventy years old. Minczeles, *Vilnius*, p. 135.
- 18 Vejas G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 181–184.
- 19 K. Lunski, *Me-ha-ghetto ha-vilnusi: tipusim u-tzlamim* (Vilnius: Agudath ha-sofrim ve-ha-zhurnalists ha-ivriim, 1921), p. 7. On the author, best known as a librarian at the Strashun library, see H. Abramowicz, *Profiles*, pp. 260–264.
- 20 Ibid., p. 209.
- 21 Minczeles, *Vilnius*, pp. 150–152; Frank M. Schuster, *Zwischen allen Fronten. Osteuropäische Juden während des Ersten Weltkrieges (1914–1919)* (Göttingen: Böhlau, 2004), pp. 445–448; Report on the Vilnius pogrom, Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas (Lithuanian Central State Archive–LCVA), f. 383, ap. 4, b. 31, l. 25, 30–45.
- 22 For a typical example of this heroic interpretation of the city's recent past, see W. Dobaczewska, *Wilno i Wilenszczyzna w latach 1863–1914. Dzieje ruchów społecznych i politycznych* (Vilnius: Nakład "Dziennik Urzędowy Kuratorium Okr. Szk. Wileńskiego," 1938).

- 23 See, for example, W. Zahorski, *Rzut oka na sto dwadzieścia lat walki narodu polskiego o niepodległość* (Vilnius: Wydawnictwo Komitetu Budowy Pomnika Wyzwolenia w Wilnie, 1919); and T. Piskor, *Wyprowa wileńska* (Warsaw: Księgarnia woskowa, 1919).
- 24 *O Wilno. Memorjał delegacji polskiej przedłożony Konferencji Brukselskiej* (Lwów: Komitet Dni Wileńskich, 1921).
- 25 B. Srocki, "Poland and the Vilno Question," in *Poland and Lithuania: The Question of Wilno* (Warsaw: "Straż Kresowa," 1921), p. 15.
- 26 *Ibid.*, pp. 28–29. The 1919 census gave the figure of 128,954 for the total population of Vilnius.
- 27 S. Kutrzeba, *La Question de Wilno* (Paris: A. Pedonne, 1928).
- 28 For more examples of this kind of rhetoric, see M. K. Pawlikowski, *Sumienie Polski. Rzecz o Wilnie i kraju wileńskim* (London: Nakładem Związku Ziem Północno-Wschodnich R. P., 1946); *The Story of Wilno* (London: Polish Research Center, 1942); Fernand Chapentier du Moriez, *Wilno: la Lithuanie et la Pologne, la Bretagne et la France* (Paris: Société générale d'Imprimerie, 1922).
- 29 A. Pukszo, *Między stolecznością a partykularyzmem* (Toruń: Europejskie Centrum Edukacyjne, 2006), pp. 139–151. Regarding Piłsudski's "eastern policy" and (failed) attempts to forge a sort of federalist arrangement with Lithuania and Ukraine, see A. Nowak, *Polska i trzy Rosje: studium polityki wschodniej Józefa Piłsudskiego (do kwietnia 1920 roku)* (Cracow: Arcana, 2001).
- 30 For a good overview of the diplomatic frictions between Poland and Lithuania in this period, see P. Łossowski, *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918–1920* (Warsaw: Książka i wiedza, 1996); *Stosunki polsko-litewskie 1921–1939* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 1997).
- 31 A. Senn, *The Great Powers, Lithuania and the Vilna Question 1920–1928* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), pp. 66–79; P. Łossowski, *Stosunki polsko-litewskie 1921–1939* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 1997), pp. 12–21; T. Wróblewski ("Juodvarnis," pseud.), *Uwagi o projekcie p. Hymansa* (Vilnius: "Žaibas," 1921).
- 32 For a detailed overview of the Vilnius question from the Lithuanian point of view (concentrating mainly on the period 1918–1922), see P. Čepėnas, *Naujujų laikų Lietuvos istorija*, vol 1 (Chicago: Dr. Kazio Griniaus fondas, 1986), I: 571–671.
- 33 On the "Great Council," see E. Motieka, *Didysis Vilniaus seimas* (Vilnius: Saulabrolis, 1996); on the first Lithuanian daily and its founder, see D. Linčiuvienė, ed., *Vilniaus kultūrinis gyvenimas ir Petras Vileišis* (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2001).
- 34 On the 16 February 1918 Act of Independence and its signatories, see E. Manelis and R. Samavičius, eds., *Vilniaus miesto istorijos skaitiniai* (Vilnius: Vilniaus knyga, 2001), pp. 478–492. See also Č. Laurinavičius, "Aus der Geschichte des provisorischen litauischen Komitees von Wilna (April bis Juni 1919)," *Nordost-Archiv* 2, no. 2 (1993), pp. 361–376.
- 35 J. Herbaczewski, *Odrodzenie Litwy wobec idei polskiej* (Cracow, 1905); *Głos bólu (Sprawa odrodzenia narodowego Litwy w związku ze sprawą wyzwolenia narodowego Polski)* (Cracow: S. A. Krzyżanowski, 1912).
- 36 J. A. Herbaczewski, *O Wilno i nie tylko o Wilno* (Vilnius: Wydawnictwo "Mildy," 1922), p. 11.

- 37 M. Biržiška, *Na posterunku wileńskim*, vol. 1 (Vilnius: Wydaw. "Głos Litwy," 1920), I: pp. 86–89.
- 38 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 141.
- 39 M. Biržiška, *Vilniaus Golgota. Okupuotosios Lietuvos lietuvių ir kančių 1919–1928 metų dienoraštis* (Kaunas: Vilniui vaduoti s-ga, 1930). It should be noted that as rector of Vilnius University in 1940 (before the Soviet takeover, though he remained rector under both Soviet and Nazi occupations until the university was shut down in 1943) Biržiška showed a positive attitude toward the Jews, for example, participating in a celebration in March 1940 marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of Yiddish writer Yehuba Leib Perets's death. N. Feigelmanas, "Mykolas Biržiška ir Vilniaus Žydai," *Kultūros Barai*, no. 1 (1995), pp. 60–61.
- 40 L. Wasilewski, "Wilno et la civilisation polonaise," *Le Monde slave* 10, no. 9 (September 1925), pp. 335–347.
- 41 O. V. De L. Milosz, "Wilna et la civilisation européenne," *Le Monde slave* 11, no. 8 (August 1926), pp. 215–229.
- 42 For a mainly military history of this region (not Vilnius alone, but including the city), see G. Łukomski, *Walka Rzeczypospolitej o kresy północno-wschodnie. Polityka i działanie militarne* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1994).
- 43 On this complicated period in Vilnius, see P. Łossowski, *Konflikt polsko-litewski*, pp. 32–45, 111–130, 155–159.
- 44 D. Fabisz, *General Lucjan Żeligowski 1865–1947. Działalność wojskowa i polityczna* (Warsaw: DiG, 2007), pp. 100–162.
- 45 L. Ran, *Yerushalayim deLita*, vol. 1, p. 30.
- 46 See, for example, I. Klausner, *Vilna, Yerushalayim deLita, Doroth Ahronim 1881–1939* (Tel Aviv: Beth Lohmei Ha'geta'oth, 1983), pp. 166–171. Also see the official reports on Jews in Middle Lithuania from early 1921 in LCVA, f. 22, ap. 1, b. 57.
- 47 Š. Liekis, *A State within a State? Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania 1918–1925* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2003); L. Truska, *Lietuviai ir žydai nuo XIX a. pabaigos iki 1941 m. birželio. Antisemitizmo Lietuvoje raida* (Vilnius: Vilniaus pedagoginis universitetas, 2005), pp. 57–77. For a more general account, covering the entire interwar period, see E. Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 213–240.
- 48 On the Lwów pogrom, see W. W. Hagen, "The Moral Economy of Popular Violence: The Pogrom in Lwów, November 1918," in *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*, ed. R. Blobaum (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp. 124–147. On the pogroms and relations between Poles and Jews in Vilnius, see J. Wolkonowski, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Wilnie i na Wileńszczyźnie 1919–1939* (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2004), pp. 70–74.
- 49 Neal Pease notes that initial reports about the pogroms were much exaggerated and the actual level of violence was lower than thought at the time—or is often imagined. However, in the years immediately after 1918, Polish Jews were convinced that hundreds or thousands of Jews had been slaughtered by Polish antisemites and this belief, however false, influenced their attitudes. N. Pease, "'This Troublesome Question': The United States and the 'Polish Pogroms' of 1918–1919," in *Ideology, Politics and Diplomacy in East Central Europe*, ed. M. Biskupski (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003), pp. 58–79.

- 50 In general on the Vilnius Jewish community during this period, see S. Kassow, "Jewish Communal Politics in Transition: The Vilna *Kehile*, 1919–1920," *YIVO Annual* 20 (1991), pp. 61–91.
- 51 One sign of Wygodzki's support for the Lithuanians was the fact that he agreed to serve as Minister of Jewish Affairs in the Lithuanian Taryba without leaving Vilnius. J. Wygodzki, *In shturm*, pp. 199–200. Wygodzki does admit that the Lithuanians made mistakes in Vilnius, including a tendency to favor Lithuanians for state jobs and an overly hasty attempt to introduce the Lithuanian language in the city (p. 203). See also, Š. Liekis, "On Jewish Participation in the Taryba in 1918," *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 4 (1999), pp. 62–82.
- 52 Lithuanian Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministry of Jewish Affairs, Press Division, Bulletin no. 13 (Lietuvos Ministerių Kabinetas, Žydų reikalų ministerija, Spaudos skyrius, Biuletenis No. 13), LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 30, esp. ll. 7–8. This bulletin is not dated, but the file bears the date 1919. The examples given by Feigelmanas to show the support of Vilnius Jews for incorporation into Lithuania all come from the short period when Lithuania held the city in late summer and early fall of 1920 and must be interpreted in that context. N. Feigelmanas, "Mykolas Biržiška ir Vilniaus Žydai," pp. 59–60.
- 53 Report on the political life of the Jewish community in Vilnius, LCVA, f. 22, ap. 1, b. 27.
- 54 A recent study on the Jewish press in Vilnius describes *Unzer Tog* as "independent" and *Najer morgen* as focusing on "politics and commerce." Neither paper was specifically connected with a political party or movement. S. Marten-Finnis, *Vilna as a Centre of the Modern Jewish Press, 1840–1928: Aspirations, Challenges, and Progress* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 172, 176.
- 55 Reports from the Jewish press, LCVA, f. 23, ap. 1, b. 182 (ll. pp. 125–126).
- 56 LCVA, f. 23, ap. 1, b. 182, l. 115–119.
- 57 LCVA, f. 23, ap. 1, b. 182, l. 38.
- 58 LCVA, f. 23, ap. 1, b. 182, l. 33.
- 59 Reports of the Head of the Department of the Jewish press, LCVA, f. 23, ap. 1, b. 255, l. 53, 56, 62.
- 60 Reports from the Jewish press, LCVA, f. 23, ap. 1, b. 182, l. 4, 7, 9, 13, 15, 21, 22.
- 61 See, for example, the different portrayals of Jewish attitudes by two scholars: Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* pp. 157–166; and J. Wołkonowski, *Stosunki*, pp. 96–108.
- 62 Typed article "The Attitude of Jews toward the Plebiscite in Vilna" dated 10 February 1921, labeled as translation of article from *Evreiskaia Tribuna*, 4 February 1921, LCVA, f. 383, ap. 7, b. 251, l. 120.
- 63 Document entitled "The Jewish delegation with Mr. Meysztowicz," LCVA, f. 19, ap. 1, b. 68, l. 64.
- 64 In his memoirs, Wygodzki is much more openly critical of the Poles, writing that the elections were not regarded as legitimate and accusing the Poles of electoral fraud, claiming that before the vote trains from Warsaw were full of "voters" coming to cast their ballots. J. Wygodzki, *In shturm*, pp. 263–265.
- 65 Matters relating to the Parliament in Vilnius (Sprawy dotyczące Sejmu ileńskiego), LCVA, f. 21, ap. 1, b. 12, l. 24.

- 66 *Wybory do Sejmu w Wilnie, 8 stycznia 1922. Oświecenie akcji wyborczej i jej wyników na podstawie źródeł urzędowych* (Vilnius: Generalny Komisarjat Wyborczy, 1922), pp. 164–165.
- 67 Ibid., pp. 102–104, 137; on the election results, see also, “Report on the progress and results of the election to the Parliament in Vilnius on January 8, 1922,” LCVA, f. 19, ap. 1, b. 92.
- 68 *Wybory do Sejmu w Wilnie*, p. 33.
- 69 Kronenberg was also given permission to publish a Yiddish-language weekly in Vilnius, *Der Emes*, LCVA, f. 19, ap. 1, b. 29, l. 22–30.
- 70 J. Kronenberg, *Sprawa wileńska ir sjoniści* (Warsaw: Nakładem autora, 1922), pp. 4, 8–9, 13.
- 71 *Wybory do Sejmu w Wilnie*, pp. 94–95 contains the text of this *Uchwała Sejmu Wileńskiego* (20 February 1922), bearing the title “Uchwała w. przedmiocie przy należności państwowej Ziemi Wileńskiej.”
- 72 B. Kolarz, *Ustrój Litwy Środkowej w latach 1920–1922* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2004), pp. 67–85. On the Vilnius Sejm, see also, A. Srebrakowski, *Sejm wileński 1922 roku. Idea i jej realizacja* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1993).
- 73 Reports of the social and political life in Vilnius, 1923, LCVA, f. 15, ap. 2, b. 114, l. 44, 51, 151–154, 225. Other non-Poles are also generally described negatively in these “situational reports” (*meldunek sytuacyjny* or simply *sprawozdania*), but not specifically connected with left-wing parties. The Polish population is generally seen as loyal and supportive of Warsaw.
- 74 Reports of the social and political life in Vilnius, 1925, LCVA, f. 15, ap. 2, b. 232, l. 20–26, 87, 143, 222, 321, 357.
- 75 J. Wołkonowski, *Stosunki*, pp. 108–172.

Documents from Archives

THE LITHUANIAN-JEWISH POLITICAL DIALOGUE IN PETROGRAD IN 1917

DARIUS STALIŪNAS

The document published herein is an important source for Lithuanian-Jewish political collaboration during World War I.¹ The earlier historiography, while analyzing the collaboration of various political groups representing these two nationalities in 1914–1918, often focused on the events in Lithuania, particularly in Vilnius. The basic plot in this context was the activity of the Lithuanian Council (Taryba) and the problem of co-opting representatives of other nationalities into the Council.² It is understandable that attention was concentrated on the events in Lithuania, which from 1915 was under German occupation. World War I weakened the great powers and created a geopolitical void, which allowed Eastern European nations to build their national states. This is one of the reasons the relations of Lithuanian political forces with other nationalities in the Russian empire have so far received less attention from historians.³ This document reflects the political processes that took place in the then-capital of Russia, Petrograd, which had little impact on Lithuania's fate or the course of Lithuanian-Jewish political relations. Nonetheless, it is important because it reflects the attitude of public figures who represented the interests of both sides toward other national groups and a possibility of collaboration.

In the spring of 1917, the Russian Provisional Government committed itself to observe the principle of self-determination of nations, which had to be implemented in the ethnographic territories of respective nationalities.⁴ The new center of power of Russia intended to transfer part of the governing functions to the fledgling national institutions (e.g., the Polish Liquidation Committee, the Ukrainian Central Rada). The Council of Russian Lithuanians established on 13 (26) March 1917 sought to obtain similar powers; it formed its own executive body—the Provisional Committee for Lithuania's Administration (PCLA).⁵ The PCLA was to take under its jurisdiction the Lithuanian institutions that in Russia, administer the areas of Lithuania liberated from the German army, facilitate the

return of refugees to the homeland, seek the compensation of war damage, and hold the Lithuanian Constituent Assembly, “which would be based on general, equal, direct and secret vote without gender distinction, and which would establish the interior order in Lithuania, as well as Lithuania’s relations with neighboring countries.”⁶ The PCLA had two urgent tasks: to receive a license to act both from the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Workers’ Council, and to enlist the representatives of other nations living in Lithuania.

At the outset, the first task seemed to be carried out successfully. A delegation of the PCLA (two Duma deputies—Martynas Yčas, Mykolas Januškevičius—and Vaclovas Bielskis) visited the head of the Provisional Government G. Lvov, who hailed the Lithuanians’ initiative and asked them to name their representatives for the governors’ posts.⁷ The PCLA obliged,⁸ but received no response. One of the reasons was that the Lithuanians sought to administrate (and undoubtedly later also to build a national state) the Kaunas, Vilnius and Suwałki *gubernias*.⁹ Poles also had claims to this territory or at least its part, and the Provisional Government was not willing to spoil relations with them.

The attempts to include representatives of other nations in the PCLA by allotting to them the same number of seats as for Lithuanians (i.e., twelve—six for Belarusians, three for Jews, two for Poles, and one for Russians),¹⁰ was met with resistance. As was already mentioned, Lithuanians planned to build a national state, and thus the required territory not only had to embrace the historical capital Vilnius, but also to have a predominantly Lithuanian population. According to the ideal of the national state, Lithuanians had to become the dominant nation and also hold the majority of administrative posts.¹¹ Thus it was not surprising that voices of dissatisfaction with such a large number of people of other nationalities in the PCLA were raised in Lithuanian society.¹²

Lithuanians expected the least problems from the Belarusian side. According to the Lithuanian press, Belarusians agreed to join the PCLA, but not before holding a relevant meeting in Minsk.¹³ Russians also seemed to be in concord, although it was unclear which political forces their candidate represented. Poles posed the most problems: they were not satisfied with the number of seats allotted to them and the projected structure of Lithuania with the dominant role of Lithuanians; thus Polish political forces did not intend to send their representatives to the PCLA.¹⁴ Finally, there were certain Polish political forces that sought to overtake control of this country and did not foresee an independent political role for Lithuania.¹⁵ Because the published document is related to the attitude of Jews

toward the PCLA, their ethnopolitical orientations should be analyzed in greater detail.

As Eli Lederhendler notes, from the 1860s the attempts of both the rabbinical elite and the liberal intelligentsia to nurture Jewishness, on the one hand, and the government's policy, on the other hand, gradually diminished the differences among separate Jewish communities and unified them into one Russian Jewish community.¹⁶ Thus the Jews were slowly forming an "imperial nation" and would have become loyal subjects of Russia, had the government not carried out a discriminative policy with regard to this ethnoconfessional group.¹⁷ The inability of Russian liberals to present a political program satisfying this ethnoconfessional group also contributed to Russia's becoming less lucrative as a political space suitable for Jews. As Simon Rabinovitch notes, after World War I, the favorable attitude of Jewish public figures to Russian liberal parties diminished, and the popularity of Jewish nationalist parties grew.¹⁸ True, the decision of the Provisional Government of 21 March 1917, which enabled Jews to become citizens with equal rights, was positively received by Russian Jewish public figures hoping to put into life their "national-cultural values,"¹⁹ that is to receive personal national autonomy. These political processes were reflected in the 24 April 1917 meeting of Jews, refugees from the Kaunas, Vilnius, Suwałki, and Grodno *gubernias*, who lived in Petrograd.

Discussions at the meeting demonstrated that the so-called imperial orientation was strongly manifest among Jews from the so-called Lithuanian *gubernias*, whom the war forced to come to the Russian capital. Many of them were convinced that there existed one Russian Jewish community, and the granting of autonomy, let alone statehood for Lithuania, to the Lithuanian Jews was not only unnecessary but also detrimental. As Vilnius-born I. Devinishsky noted, in that case "along with the separation of independent regions from Russia, Jewry faces the threat of splitting into several parts."²⁰ Another argument against joining the PCLA was related to the procedure of its formation. Even those who supported the collaboration with the PCLA disapproved of its undemocratic character. As was already mentioned, this committee was set up on the Lithuanians' initiative, thus showing that this national group was meant to have the dominant role. The participants of the meeting criticized the way of forming the PCLA and thought that similar committees had to be built by democratic means, that is agreement of all national groups. Besides, a discussion arose whether a meeting with more than a hundred Jewish participants was authorized to solve such important questions. Probably a larger

meeting should be staged, which would better represent the interests of Jews from Lithuania. Yet this standpoint did not prevail at the meeting.

It was voted to join the PCLA and delegate four members to the committee.²¹ These members were the initiator and chairman of the meeting, the State Duma member from the Kaunas *gubernia* Naftali Fridman, Ozer Finkelshtein from Kaunas, Solomon Khoronzhitsky from Šiauliai, and Moisei Gutman. One of the main arguments of these participants and their supporters for joining the PCLA was the fact that the committee was temporary, created only with the aim of solving practical issues and could not decide the political fate of Lithuania. Jews suffered not only from general war-induced difficulties, like other nations of the Russian empire, but also experienced the persecution of the Russian army trying to evict them from the regions close to the front.²² Apparently it was this motif—that is the desire to help their compatriots—that became decisive and determined the results of the vote. However, in addition to this primarily practical motif, there was another one, which revealed more fundamental shifts in political orientations of at least some of the Jewish public figures.

The meeting agreed with “the granting of wide autonomy to ethnographic Lithuania”; in other words, some Jewish politicians thought that the building of the Lithuanian national state did not contradict Jewish interests, and probably even was the most suitable solution for them. The arguments that were voiced in the meeting confirm this hypothesis. Finkelshtein, a native and inhabitant of Kaunas, recalled nice neighborly relations of Lithuanians and Jews that lasted six hundred years and were crowned with collaboration during the elections to the Russian Dumas.²³ Khoronzhitski distinguished Lithuanians among the country’s other nations and noted that the Jews’ attitude toward Lithuanians should be much more positive than that of Belarusians or Poles, and in general, “the Lithuanian nation should be given an appropriate place in Lithuania.” The Zionist-socialist Gutman, a native of the Ukmergė district, spoke for the implementation of the “national-ethnographic principle” and added that Lithuanians were the best allies for the Jews. Part of the participants of the meeting, Fridman among them, probably feared that adopting a negative decision and refusing to join the activity of the PCLA might have caused considerable indignation among Lithuanians, thus “for the sake of friendly coexistence of both nations” it was necessary to participate in the activity of the PCLA.

This positive attitude toward the idea of a national Lithuanian state was connected to the understanding that a Polish alternative—inclusion of Lithuania in a Polish-dominated political unit—would not be a better out-

come for the Jews in view of the worsened Polish-Jewish relations. It is no less important in this context to look at the groups of the participants in the discussion. Although not all the participants could be identified, some tendencies can be pointed out.

The Jews from the Vilnius *gubernia* opposed cooperation with the PCLA. This should not be surprising. Though sometimes during the elections to the Russian Dumas Jews would cooperate with Lithuanians both in the Vilnius *gubernia* and in the northwestern region, the role of the Lithuanians in these constellations was marginal, thus we can assert that Vilnius Jews did not regard Lithuanians as a major political factor. However, a different situation formed in the Kaunas *gubernia*.²⁴

Since the elections to the First Russian Duma in the Kaunas *gubernia*, Lithuanian-Jewish election blocs were formed that enabled the two groups to elect their representatives while excluding Poles. During the elections to the two first Dumas, the major role on the “Jewish Street” was played by the Union for the Equal Rights of Jews in Russia. Some participants of the meeting and those who spoke for cooperation with Lithuanians were members of that Union and active participants in the elections. Naftali Fridman (1863–1921) was a lawyer, from 1888 worked as a deputy barrister in Panevėžys, and was a member of the Panevėžys city administrative board. He greatly contributed to the activity of the Union and the Russian Constitutional Democrats, and was elected to the Third and Fourth Dumas from the Kaunas *gubernia*.²⁵ Historiography contains considerable references to his activity in defending the Jewish rights, including during World War I.²⁶ Fridman was a member of the council of the Ministry of Justice in the Russian Provisional Government and a deputy chairman of the PCLA. In the same year (1917) he actively fought for the rights of Jews of all Russia.²⁷ It was thanks to his efforts that the meeting (see above) took a decision to join the PCLA. Later Fridman was elected to the Lithuanian Constituent Seimas.²⁸ A native and inhabitant of Kaunas, O. Finkelshtein (1863–1932) was a lawyer who defended Jews arrested for illegal activity, sympathized with the Bund, and was arrested for the distribution of illegal writings in Kaunas and deported in 1905. He participated in the activity of the Union and the elections to the Russian Dumas. In 1918, he returned to Lithuania and led the party of Folkists (Jewish nationalists). Having been elected to the Constituent Seimas, and later to the Second and Third Seimas, he took an active part in Lithuania’s public life.²⁹ A participant of the meeting, L. Ozhinski, as well as some other participants, was also an active member of the Union in the Kaunas *gubernia*.³⁰ It may seem that Boris Dov Brutskus (1874–1938), who was

born in Palanga, Courland *gubernia* and spoke against joining the PCLA, did not belong to this group. In fact, his case does not contradict our hypothesis about a more favorable attitude of the Jews of the Kaunas *gubernia* toward collaboration with Lithuanians. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Brutskus was involved in solving the issues of Jewish agriculture and was an active member of the Jewish Colonization Society, but from 1907 he taught at the Institute of Agriculture in St. Petersburg,³¹ and thus must have been removed from Lithuania's affairs and not too familiar with the political processes in the country.

When the opinions of the meeting participants divided, a decision was taken to vote. However, the Vilnius representatives refused to vote. The explanation for this decision is very simple. The participants included sixty-eight Jews from the Kaunas *gubernia*, thirty-eight from the Vilnius *gubernia*, six from the Suwałki *gubernia*, and seven from the Grodno *gubernia*. Thus even if the Vilnius representatives had sided with the scarce participants from the Suwałki and Grodno *gubernias*, they would have been outnumbered by the Kaunas delegates: fifty-one versus sixty-eight.³² It is possible that the initiator of this meeting Fridman, who later became an active member of the PCLA, personally knew many of his compatriots descended from the Kaunas *gubernia*, who were living in Petrograd at the time. This would explain how they came to constitute the majority at the meeting; but a version that such a proportion was an accident should not be discarded. This structure of the meeting as if guaranteed beforehand an outcome that Fridman sought, as the Jews from the Grodno and Suwałki *gubernias* were few and did not play an important role in the discussion.

Here attention should be drawn to the circumstance that the main focus of Lithuanian political projections were the ethnic Lithuanian lands in the Kaunas, Vilnius, and Suwałki *gubernias*, while in the meeting, Jews from the Grodno *gubernia* also participated. Thus we can see that representatives of two nations were guided by different "mental maps"—the Jewish Lithuania was much larger than the Lithuanian one.³³

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF JEWS FROM THE KAUNAS, VILNIUS, SUWALKI, AND GRODNO *GUBERNIAS* LIVING IN PETROGRAD ON THE ISSUE OF ELECTING THE DELEGATES TO THE PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE FOR LITHUANIA'S ADMINISTRATION, HELD ON 24 APRIL 1917. PETROGRAD, TROITSKAYA ST. 34, IVRIO HALL.

140 persons are present at the meeting. The meeting is opened by a member of the State Duma, Naftali Markovich Fridman, who presides over the meeting and leads the discussions.

The chairman reads a report about the aims and tasks of the newly formed Provisional Committee for Lithuania's Administration, about the structure of the Committee, about the project of its formation by involving members of other nationalities who live in Lithuania, and about the received proposal of the Provisional Committee to elect four delegates from the Jewish population of Lithuania to the Provisional Committee.

Discussions regarding the issue of the competence of the present meeting to elect delegates representing the entire Jewish population of Lithuania begin. Some delegates stand for the democratic principle and for this purpose find it necessary to form an organizational committee with the aim of holding a congress of the entire Jewish population elected by general vote. Others think that the national and cultural life in Lithuania is a concern of not only the Lithuanian Jews, but also the entire Russian Jewry, which can solve this issue in a general Jewish congress.

The chairman explains that the Lithuanian Committee is only temporary and cannot occupy itself with the solving of the issue of Lithuania's autonomy in the broad sense. The main task of the Provisional Committee is solving the urgent issues that cannot be postponed. Postponing the election of Jewish delegates until the elections are held by means of general, equal, secret, and direct vote is not expedient and is detrimental to the interests of Lithuanian Jews.

The following issue is put to vote: Should the present meeting concerning the election of four delegates to the Provisional Committee for Lithuania's Administration be continued?

The issue is solved positively and unanimously.

Discussions on the subject begin.

Mr. Gutman (Kaunas *gubernia*, Ukmergė district) (speaks on behalf of the Zionist Socialist Labor party) greets the pending unification of the Lithuanian Jews. Lithuania must freely express its opinion about its future structure. In the discussions among nationalities (Lithuanians, Belarussians, etc.), the national-ethnographic principle must prevail rather than a

mechanical division of the population into *gubernias*. All nationalities must be guaranteed free development that would secure their interests [,] and Jews need allies who can be found in the Lithuanian nation. The question about the representation of Jews and their quantitative participation in Lithuania's administrative government must be solved by all democratic groups residing there.

Chairman asks the meeting to leave out the issue of the future structure of Lithuania and points to the urgent issues. Above all, the question of restructuralization of the evacuated administrative units of Lithuania should be solved, and this will be the primary task of the Provisional Committee.

Mr. Dubinski (Vilnius *gubernia*). The speaker finds the question of the urgent issue as it is raised unclear. He thinks that the issues of refugees and the participation of Jews in the evacuated administrative and other institutions, like any other relevant issues, are related to the general Jewish policy regarding the Lithuanian question. Lithuanian Jews have the same parties as all Russian Jews, and the national rights of Lithuanian Jews are inter-related to those of all Russian Jews. That is why all Jewish parties of Russia should state their opinion about the question of sending delegates to the Lithuanian Committee. Regarding the number of Jewish representatives, all democracies living in Lithuania should express their opinion.

Mr. Gurvich (Kaunas *gubernia*) agrees with the opinion of the previous speakers. Taking into account the impossibility of correct representation of Jewish democracy of Lithuania at the present moment, he suggests limiting oneself to what is possible. Regarding the issue of Jewish autonomy in Lithuania, it is necessary to join efforts with all Russian Jews.

Mr. Kharnas (Kaunas *gubernia*, Panevėžys district) suggests that Jews rally the proletariat and the bourgeoisie on the given question. And he suggests to give instructions for the Jews in the Lithuanian Committee not to address political issues of the new Lithuania. To prove that the Jews will not step back, but at the same time will not infringe on the rights of other nationalities.

Mr. Antokolski³⁴ (city of Vilnius). The only thing that today's meeting can formally do is to set up an organizational committee responsible for the calling of a more numerous meeting that would better represent the Jews' interests. Upon the chairman's permission he provides information about the terrifying situation of Jews in the occupied Vilnius region.

He calls the assembled to help as much as they can in saving the lives of fifty thousand Jews of Vilnius who are dying of famine. The sending of

delegates to the Committee can probably be of invaluable help to our compatriots.

Barrister Khoronzhitsky³⁵ (City of Šiauliai). Jews cannot regard Lithuanians in the same way as Belarusians and Poles. The Lithuanian nation must be given an appropriate place in Lithuania. While joining forces with the Lithuanians in the Committee, the Jews must proudly bear their standard. It must be demonstrated that even a minority must be reckoned with. By sending delegates to the Lithuanian Committee, the meeting should not claim an exclusive representation of all Lithuanian Jews. While distributing the seats among the Jews, a certain amount of four [seats] should be given to the representatives of Socialist parties as well.

Mr. Devinishski (City of Vilnius). Along with the separation of independent regions from Russia, Jewry faces a threat of splitting into several parts. The formation of the Lithuanian Committee is related to the birth of the Lithuanian state, and the Lithuanian Jews are singled out from the general mass of Russian Jewry. The speaker vigorously protests against the emerging intention of the meeting to solve positively the issue of sending delegates. Neither the meeting, nor the selected delegates would be trusted. He suggests adopting a formula that would exclude a possibility of a demonstration and acknowledge incompetence in the issue of sending delegates, and postpone the discussion of this issue.

Chairman explains that:

- 1) At the present time it is impossible to convene a larger meeting with overall representation of the entire Jewish population of Lithuania;
- 2) Delegates are elected only temporarily, and will hand over their authorizations as soon as a broader circle of the Jewish population elects new representatives; and
- 3) The issue of sending delegates cannot be postponed by any means.

Mr. Vigoder (Muravyevo, Kaunas *gubernia*) agrees with the previous speaker, and thinks that Jews should participate in the Lithuanian Committee despite the fact that in formal terms the present meeting cannot claim to be competent.

Barrister Finkelshtein (City of Kaunas) notes good neighborly relations of Lithuanians and Jews during the six centuries of their coexistence and their union formed in the elections to the State Duma. He thinks that Lithuanians made a fatal mistake by failing to turn to other nationalities living in Lithuania, Jews in particular, in good time. This must be noted in the congratulatory address to Lithuanians. In their turn, Jews must begin

preparatory work for the reconstruction of their native places, and for this purpose appeal to the Lithuanian Committee.

The enlistment of speakers is stopped, and the time allotted to those previously enlisted is limited to five minutes.

Mr. I. Volf³⁶ (City of Kaunas) (regarding the agenda) proposes to close the meeting and continue it in the nearest future. Chairman proposes, in view of urgent circumstances, to continue the meeting without delay. The issue is put under vote and a decision is taken to continue the meeting.

A break of ten minutes is called.

Mr. Gutman (Kaunas *gubernia*) thinks that the sending of delegates to the Lithuanian Committee is starting to turn into politics. He proposes a resolution.

Mr. Brutskus opposes the resolution of Mr. Gutman. Jews in Russia cannot be divided into parts according to wishes of separate groups and nationalities.

Mr. Makover. Before joining the Lithuanian Committee, proofs of its democratic structure must be obtained. He does not think it possible to send delegates to the Committee.

Mr. Shapiro (City of Vilnius) announces on behalf of the Vilnius representatives that they will not participate in the vote on the issue of sending delegates to the Lithuanian Committee.

The list of speakers comes to an end. Discussions are closed.

Chairman explains the situation and urges the meeting to take a cautious and well-considered decision while solving the question that may determine the atmosphere of the future coexistence of the two nations.

The resolutions of Mr. Gutman, barrister Finkelshtein, Mr. Gurvich, Mr. Adzhinsky, and Mr. Dubinsky are announced. By the majority of votes (against four) a resolution of barrister Finkelshtein is passed. The resolution reads:

The meeting of Jews, natives of Lithuania presently living in Petrograd, hails the idea of wide autonomy of ethnographic Lithuania based on democratic principles and with consideration of the interests of the national minorities.

The meeting thinks that the truly democratic principles, toward which Lithuania should orient itself, require that its first political unit, the Provisional Committee, be built not according to the curial system, but at the joint meeting of expatriates of all nationalities from Lithuania.

However, taking into account the fact that the Committee poses for itself solely practical tasks until the end of the war, the meeting considers it possible to delegate four representatives to the Committee.

The meeting elects delegates N. M. Fridman, O. A. Finkelshtein, barrister Khoronzhitsky and Mr. Gutman, and candidates G. I. Volf and L. S. Ozhinsky.

The meeting obliges the elected members of the Lithuanian Committee to organize the Lithuanian Jewish Congress without delay (for this purpose they are granted the right of cooptation).

The proposal of Mr. Gutman to send Jewish delegates on condition that the Provisional Lithuanian Committee should be re-elected on a more democratic basis is rejected by the meeting.

The meeting is closed at 3 A.M.

NOTES

- 1 The document, which was written in Russian, is held in Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Ukrainy [the Ukrainian State Central Historical Archive (Kiev); henceforth – TsGIAU], Naftali Fridman's file. The file also contains other documents related to the activity of the Provisional Committee for Lithuania's Administration, as well as the lists of participants of the meeting under discussion. The file was called "Minutes (copy) of the meeting of Jews—citizens of Lithuania living in Petrograd regarding the election of delegates to the Provisional Committee for Lithuania's Administration; suggestions for restructuring schools in Lithuania, and K. Volotski's letters to Fridman regarding his election as the deputy commissar of the Kaunas *gubernia*." This title of the file was added later.
- 2 A. Shohat, "The Beginnings of Anti-Semitism in Independent Lithuania," *Yad Vashem Studies*, 1958, no. 2, pp. 7–48; A. Strazhas, D. Golan, "Yehudei lita u-medinijut germaniyah klapei admat oberost," in *Mehkarim be-toldot am israhel ve-erets israhel*, 4 (Haifa, 1978), pp. 32–47; Z. Balshan, "Maavakam shel yehudei lita al zekhuyotehem ha-leumiyot, 1917–1918," *Shvut* 10 (1984), pp. 67–82; Š. Liekis, "On Jewish Participation in the Taryba in 1918," *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 4 (1999), pp. 62–82; Š. Liekis, *A State within a State? Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania 1918–1925* (Vilnius: Versus aureaus, 2003); E. Bendikaitė, *Sionistinis sąjūdis Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2006), pp. 60–69.
- 3 Only the sole fact was mentioned that twelve non-Lithuanians were supposed to be included in the Provisional Committee for Lithuania's Administration or that Jewish representatives took part in its activities. O. Finkelshtein, "Paraleln," in *Zum ondenken fun O. Finkelshtein* (Kaunas, 1938), pp. 180–181; A. Strazhas, D. Golan, "Yehudei lita vemedinijut germanija kelefei adamat oberost," p. 33.
- 4 R. Lopata, *Lietuvos valstybingumo raida 1914–1918 metais* (Lietuvių Atgimimo istorijos studijos, vol. 9) (Vilnius: Mintis, 1996), p. 117.
- 5 "Pirmieji tautos tarybos darbai," *Lietuvių balsas*, 1917, no. 21.

- 6 P. Čepėnas, *Naujųjų laikų Lietuvos istorija*, vol. 2 (Chicago, 1986), pp. 61–62; J. Aničas, *Jonas ir Martynas Yčas. Gyvenimas ir darbai Lietuvai* (Vilnius: Vaga, 2007), pp. 315–316.
- 7 “Liet. Delegacija pas Laikiną Rusijos vyriausybę ir Darbininkų ir Kareivių Atstovų Taryboje,” *Lietuvių balsas*, 1917, no. 21; Z. Balshan, “Maavakam shel jehude lita al zekhujotehem ha-leumiyot, 1917–1918,” *Shvut* 10 (1984), p. 65.
- 8 PCLA letter to G. Lvov, 2 May 1917, TsGIAU, f. 1010, d. 50, l. 2–3.
- 9 “Tautos taryba,” *Lietuvių balsas*, 1917, no. 23.
- 10 “Pirmieji tautos tarybos darbai,” *Lietuvių balsas*, 1917, no. 21.
- 11 “Tautos taryba,” *Lietuvių balsas*, 1917, no. 22.
- 12 K. K. Lizdeika [E. Draugelis], “Kas gi kaltas?” *Lietuvių balsas*, 1917, no. 27. There was a curious postscript from the editorial board reminding that the PCLA was only a temporary institution, thus people of other nationalities were supposedly needed only at the beginning, and later Lithuanians would be able to run things alone. See also B. Perkūnėlis [B. Prapuolenis], “Pagaliaus ir lietuviai sukruto,” *Lietuvių balsas*, 1917, no. 37. Here fears were raised that Poles might pose as Belarusians and get their way into the PCLA. Thus the author of the article thought that Poles were more dangerous to Lithuanians than Belarusians.
- 13 “Tautos taryba,” *Lietuvių balsas*, 1917, no. 22.
- 14 “L. Tautos Taryba,” *Lietuvių balsas*, 1917, no. 24.
- 15 Letter from Martynas Yčas to his brother Jonas, Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas, n.d., f. 942, ap. 1, b. 2, l. 572.
- 16 E. Lederhendler, “Did Russian Jewry Exist prior to 1917?” in *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and Soviet Union*, ed. Y. Ro'i (Portland: Frank Cass, 1995), pp. 15–27.
- 17 J. D. Klier, “Why Were Russian Jews Not Kaisertreu?” *Ab Imperio*, 2003, no. 4, pp. 41–58.
- 18 S. Rabinovitch, “Alternative to Zion. The Jewish Autonomist Movement in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia,” Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University.
- 19 A declaration of the Jewish public congress (after 21 March 1917), The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (Jerusalem), HMF/191, l. 1. On the attitudes of the Jews in Petrograd in 1917, see V. Kaplan, “Jews in Petrograd in 1917,” *Shvut. Studies in Russian and East European Jewish History and Culture* (New Series), 5, no. 21 (1997), pp. 81–95.
- 20 The goal to preserve the Russian empire undivided was typical of many Jewish public figures: A. Shohat, “The Beginnings of Anti-Semitism in Independent Lithuania,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, 1958, no. 2, pp. 14–15; Z. Balshan, “Maavakam shel yehudei lita al zekhuyotehem ha-leumiyot, 1917–1918,” p. 68.
- 21 Lithuanians had reserved three seats for Jews and remains unclear how four seats emerged. The number four is also mentioned in the article by Uriah Katsenelenbogen, “Tsvishn felker. Ba di litviner (An iberblik),” *Yidishe folksblat*, 1917, no. 2, 11 October 1917, p. 22.
- 22 S. Goldin, “Deportatsiia russkoi armiei evreev iz Kovenskoi i Kurliandskoi gubernii (aprel'-mai 1915g.),” in *Evrei v meniaushchemsia mire. Materialy 5-i mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii, Riga, 16–17 sentyabrya, 2003*, Ed. G. Branover and R. Ferber (Riga, 2005), pp. 260–265. For more on the expulsion of Jews from western borderlands of the empire see E. Lohr, “Novye dokymenty o rossiiskoi armii i evreiax vo vremia Pervoi mirovoi voiny,” *Vestnik Evreiskogo universiteta*, 2003, no. 8(26), pp. 245–268; S.

- Goldin, "Russkoe komandovanie i evrei vo vremia Pervoi Mirovoi voiny: prichiny formirovaniia negativnogo stepeotipa," in *Mirovoi krizis 1917–1920 godov i sud'ba vostochnoevropeiskogo evreistva* (Moscow: ROSSPEN 2005), pp. 29–46.
- 23 For more see the article by Darius Staliūnas in this volume.
- 24 Of course, there were different attitudes toward Lithuania's independence among Jewish political groupings, which are dealt with in Marcos Silber's article, but here only regional distinctions are stressed.
- 25 N. Fridman, *Der yidishe natsional rat in Lite. Barikht vegn zayn tetikayt 1920–1922* (Kovne, 1922), pp. iv–v. He was a "reserve" Jewish candidate from the Kaunas *gubernia* in the elections to the Second Duma in early 1907. "Korrespondentsii," *Rassvet*, 1907, no. 6.
- 26 N. Fridman, *Der idishe natsional rat in Lite*, p. v; P. Čepėnas, *Naujujų laikų Lietuvos istorija*, vol. 2 (Chicago, 1986), pp. 19, 44; Ch. Gassenschmidt, *Jewish Liberal Politics in Czarist Russia, 1900–14. The Modernization of Russian Jewry* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 105–109, 116–118; A. Gaigalaitė, *Lietuvos atstovai Rusijos Dūmoje 1906–1917 metais* (Vilnius: Vilniaus pedagoginis universitetas, 2006), pp. 136ff.; O. V. Budnitskii, *Rossiiskie evrei mezdu krasnymi i belymi (1917–1920)* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2006), pp. 170, 290; S. Rabinovitch, "Alternative to Zion, pp. 1. 199–200, 222.
- 27 V. Kaplan, "Jews in Petrograd in 1917," p. 86.
- 28 E. Bendikaitė, "Fridmanas Naftalis," in *Didysis Lietuvos parlamentarų žodynas*, vol. 2: *Lietuvos Steigiamojo Seimo (1920–1922 metų) narių biografinis žodynas* (Vilnius: Vilniaus pedagoginio universiteto leidykla, 2006,) pp. 143–144.
- 29 E. Bendikaitė, "Finkelšteinas Ozeris," in *Didysis Lietuvos parlamentarų žodynas*, vol. 2: *Lietuvos Steigiamojo Seimo (1920–1922 metų) narių biografinis žodynas* (Vilnius: Vilniaus pedagoginio universiteto leidykla, 2006), pp. 140–142.
- 30 The pre-election meeting of the Jews of the Kaunas *gubernia*, which took place on 26–28 December 1906.
- 31 J. O. Ronall, "Boris Bruckus," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Detroit and London, 2007), p. 228.
- 32 Lists of participants of the meeting, TsGIAU, f. 1010, d. 50, l. 14–25.
- 33 The Jewish figures belonging to different political trends that actively participated in the building of modern Lithuania later sought that the territory of the new state would include as large an area as possible; E. Bendikaitė, *Sionistinis sąjūdis Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2006), pp. 64–65.
- 34 Nephew of the famous sculptor, Mark Antokolski.
- 35 Member of Dubnov's Folkspartey from 1877 until 1938.
- 36 A leading figure of the Kaunas Jewish Community.

DOCUMENTS ON THE LITHUANIAN COUNCIL OF 1918 IN THE CENTRAL ZIONIST ARCHIVE IN JERUSALEM

ŠARŪNAS LIEKIS

The formation of the Lithuanian Council has long belonged to the field of the nationalist or class-related narrative. The official historiography of interwar Lithuania gave rise to a pompous narrative that extolled the will of the Lithuanian nation and patriotism, while in the Soviet period the official historiography of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic treated the Lithuanian Council as exclusively engaged in “bourgeois” activity.¹ In both of these narratives very little attention was dedicated to another council, which included representatives of national minorities, among them Belarusians and Jews. It was not until the first decade of the Third Republic of Lithuania that works emphasizing the perspective of a multinational Lithuania, a country seeking to become a pluralist society, began to appear. They underlined a synthesis of different nationalist (Lithuanian, Jewish, and Belarusian) narratives, and tried to look at the issues of the Lithuanian Council from the viewpoint of expediency, if the national minorities had to be involved in adopting decisions in the state. Attempts were made to integrate the perspectives of the development of institutions of the Lithuanian ethnic minorities, and the interaction of politics and ideology. These works also addressed the relationship of legal regulation of the life of ethnic minorities and the political decisions adopted by the state.²

However, these publications only drew the guidelines for the further research of the relations among Lithuania’s ethnic minorities. Besides, historical research revealed new details allowing us to critically explain the genesis of the Lithuanian Council and the factors that contributed to the formulations of declaration of Lithuania’s independence.

Three documents presented herein reflect the initial period of the activity of the Lithuanian Council, February–May 1918, before it was joined by representatives of the national minorities. In that period, the Lithuanian

Council was influenced by outer circumstances and despite certain dissatisfaction among its members had to transform itself into a Council representing all of Lithuania rather than remaining an institution representing exclusively ethnic Lithuanians. In its first session on 24 September 1917, the Council decided to invite representatives of the national minorities to the Presidium. On 17 October of the same year, a decision that the minorities should elect their representatives at their own conferences was adopted. The documents presented herein reflect the doubts of Lithuania's Jewish politicians and their arguments about the nature of the Lithuanian Council, the intentions and plans of building the state. The documents also reflect the views of Lithuania's Jewish politicians about the Council's claims to represent the entire population of Lithuania.

The first meeting between a representative of the Council and a representative of the Lithuanian Zionists Shimshon Rosenboim (1859–1935) took place between February and April 1918; during the meeting, the issue of including Lithuania's Jewish politicians in the Lithuanian Council was discussed.³ The documents presented herein illustrate the course of the negotiations and meetings that led to the inclusion of Lithuania's Jewish politicians in the Lithuanian Council. Besides, the documents also reflect the attempts of the German occupational administration in *Oberost* to exert pressure on Jewish politicians and impel them to join the activity of the Lithuanian Council and seek compromises. From the beginning of World War I, Germany's political leadership coordinated its actions in the east with the Zionist Bureau in Berlin. It presumed that the "Jewish question" in the territory of the Russian empire, still unsolved at that time, would be one of the major problems in the propaganda war for the support of the United States for the Entente or the Central Powers. While speaking for the solution of the Jewish question and the ensuring of equal rights in the territory of the Russian empire, Germany expected to win the support of local and international Jewish organizations.

The almost yearlong process of including representatives of Lithuania's national minorities in the Council ended with the cooptation of six Belarusian representatives on 27 November 1918, and three Belarusians on 4 April 1919. After the first Belarusians became involved in the activity of the Council, on 1 December 1918 the Lithuanian Council of Ministers established the position of the Minister of Belarusian Affairs, appointing Juozapas Voronko.⁴ Belarusian politicians, fearing the Soviet invasion from the east, on the one hand, and the domination of the new Republic of Poland in the region, on the other hand, saw the newly formed Republic of Lithuania as the sole potential ally. Belarusian politicians sought Belaru-

sian territorial autonomy with Belarusian as the state language, the Belarusian secretariat comprised of the Belarusian members of the Council as the supreme legislative institution of the Belarusian part, and executive power concentrated in the hands of the Ministry of Belarusian Affairs.⁵ However, the gestures of the Council's majority aimed at Belarusians remained only symbolic, while ultimately Belarusians were not trusted. Although planning to build Lithuania in its ethnographic limits with slight territorial corrections around Vilnius, Lithuanian politicians regarded the ultimate goals of Belarusian politicians to build Belarus in the same ethnographic limits with suspicion. It is obvious that both political projects had to overlap in the eastern lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and if not for the Soviet and Polish factor at the beginning of 1919, it would have aroused conflicts in the future. The Lithuanian government generally thought that Belarusians neglected the interests of new Lithuania and wanted to build their own state in the territory of Lithuania.⁶

Representatives of the Jewish Zionist parties were the last to join the Council. Nahman Rachmilewitz, Shimshon Rosenboim, and Jakub Wygodzki, who were elected at the Conference of Lithuanian Zionists on 5–8 December 1918, joined the Lithuanian Council on 11 December. Thus, a new and positive page of collaboration of Lithuanian and Jewish politicians was turned. By including representatives of national minorities, the Lithuanian Council supported its claims to be called an institution representing the entire population of Lithuania. A slow and distrustful appearance of Lithuania's Jewish politicians in the Council was regarded as mutually advantageous, which improved Lithuania's image and supposedly ensured efficient international support of Jewish organizations for the Republic of Lithuania.

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MINUTES⁷

OF THE SESSION THAT TOOK PLACE ON WEDNESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 1918,
5.30 P.M. AT THE CENTRAL BUREAU

With the participation of Chief Rabbi Dr. Rubinstein from Vilnius and Rabbi Karg from Kaunas, Mr. Deputies Dr. Oscar Cohn, Max Cohen-Reuss, Davidsohn; also Mr. Kaliski and Dr. Bloch, Mr. van Raalte, Dr. Hantke, Dr. Jacobson, Herrmann, Dr. Lowenstein, Trietsch, Klee, Goldmann, Schocken, and Rubaschorr.

Mr. Dr. Hantke opened the session and drew everyone's attention to the important and interesting reports, for which Chief Rabbi Rubinstein was able to collect information in Vilnius.

At the beginning of his speech, Chief Rabbi Rubinstein emphasized that neither he nor his colleague, Rabbi Karg had any mandate from the Lithuanian Jews that would enable them to be regarded as experts in the wishes of Lithuanian Jews.

Now, when the period of independent Lithuania is about to begin in one or another form, we have reached a turning point in our history. Therefore we do not want to enter a period of suffering, which we experienced under the German regime, and which we have now left behind. I would like briefly to draw your attention to the requisitions, which Jews were the first to face, an obligatory loan of 1 million rubles, of which 690,000 comes from Jews, and the rest part has to be obtained, and to forced labor, which everyone still remembers. The Jews of Lithuania will bear memory of these things for decades to come. Now a common hope for peace has appeared, though for us it does not mean hope. It seems that all these things can only bring us a turn for the worse.

You know very well how the Lithuanian State Council was established. Not on the election basis, but because the government involved the genuine Lithuanian national element in its work. The State Council does not represent the opinion and wishes of the Lithuanian population, let alone non-Lithuanian nations, under any circumstances. Sometime after the establishment of the State Council I learned that two Jews, one of whom was myself, had to be appointed to the State Council. We refused the appointment to the State Council in this form, in the same way as other nations refused it. We did this not because of formal reasons, but because proper representation of the Jewish nation cannot be executed by two Jews.

German politics sought to make Lithuanians the ruling nation in economics and politics. Lithuanians are predominantly peasants with a weak stratum of the intelligentsia and without the middle class. The Jews have in their hands business and commerce, the entire sale of agricultural products to consumers and the sale of industrial goods to farmers. Also the number of Jewish workers and craftsmen is quite large. The present tendency is to remove Jews from trade and to encourage the establishing of farmers' cooperatives, which will result in depreciation of household goods and bring an end to Jewish intermediary trade. It is not a historical process, which should certainly take a long time, and to which Jews could adapt and in the long run take up other occupations; it is rather a movement artificially imposed from above with the aim of eliminating Jews. Our condition may become such that the fate of Polish Jews would seem to us like a paradise.

Belarusians refuse to yield to Lithuanians, who in fact are not a majority in Lithuania. For the same reason, Jews cannot side with Lithuanians, as it would cause a deadly discord with Belarusians. Anyway, we stand most resolutely against those Lithuanians who seek to tear the united Lithuania apart by separating the agrarian region (Vilnius, Kaunas) from Grodno and Białystok, which have mainly urban citizens. Both parts must remain united.

In addition to the requirement of convening a conference of Lithuanian Jews, we also require the recognition of our rights as a national minority. While Lithuanians assert that the granting of these rights is their internal issue, we regard it as an international question that has to be solved by European states. The Berlin Congress deemed the issue of civil rights international; how much longer will the rights remain national? We demanded autonomy from the Lithuanian State Council. When we announced about it in a conversation with Lithuanians, they explained to us that it was beyond the competence of the State Council. If so, how can the State Council be authorized to decide to separate from Russia and sign a military agreement with the Germans?

I see the national electoral curia as a form of protection of our civil and national rights. Certainly, it is a conference of Lithuanian Jews that should decide upon it. Yet I believe that the electoral curia and proportionate representation of Jews in the parliament and governmental institutions would guarantee that the rights granted to us by the Constitution are applied in practice as well.

Regarding all these issues, we can appeal to the German administration, though we are not German subjects. However, German Jews most

probably can do it, and I have come here to find out from you what German Jews are willing to do on our behalf.

At the end, the Chief Rabbi Rubinstein drew the attention to the fact that Britain's statement on Palestine provoked great enthusiasm from all Lithuanian Jewry. He finished with a request to consider his report confidential.

Misters Max Cohen, Oskar Cohn, Kaliski, Chief Rabbi Rubinstein, Mr. Davidsohn, Dr. Hantke, and Dr. Klee took part in the further discussion. At the beginning, the attitude of the Lithuanian Social Democrats to the Jewish issue was discussed, and Chief Rabbi Rubinstein explained that an organized and strong social democratic movement did not exist in Lithuania, and the leading Social Democrats placed their democratic principles lower than Lithuanian national requirements. In the further discussion, Chief Rabbi Rubinstein drew the attention to very harsh antisemitic propaganda, which is spread in the Lithuanian newspaper "Lietuvos aidas" and writings and brochures, particularly in the writings of the members of the Lithuanian Council Gaigalaitis.⁸

Then the debates turned from economic circumstances to the national process, which, in the opinion of Mr. Kaliski and Mr. Schocken, had become prominent in all countries—the attempts to nationalize industrial production as much as possible. It would not be wrong to assert that in Lithuania it was done with particular pleasure, as in that process, Jews could become a target. Now farmers have obliged themselves to supply all their products to the district administrative boards, which makes one think that with this large number German traders who today are sitting like soldiers in the district administrative boards, after the war, the civil administration will have to be dismissed. That is why a unanimous opinion prevails that it is only through establishing the syndicate of Jewish traders, which should be arranged by the authorities, and which is necessary for Jewish traders, that the Jewish position can be maintained.

It will be demanded from Dr. Oscar Cohn and Mr. Davidsohn that the Zionist organization carries out explanatory work about the situation of Lithuanian Jews. Oscar Cohn demanded that while performing a task related to the Reichstag, he and his friends be given a possibility to present actual material. However, on the other hand, active involvement in the German-Lithuanian community was considered pointless.

Chief Rabbi Rubinstein explicated some details, particularly concerning the school issue. Religious schools allowed by the Russian law are also officially allowed by the present regime, but in reality, at least in villages, they are closed. In Jewish people's schools, a four-hour course in

religion including the teaching of the Hebrew language is allowed. During these several hours, the Hebrew language, Jewish history, religion, the Bible and the Talmud should be taught, which is impossible, as Prof. Strackin and Chief Rabbi Rubinstein acknowledged during the discussion.

Chief Rabbi Rubinstein emphasized that in his opinion, to address the school issue at this point is amiss, because it is not correct to give the Germans an opportunity to shun more important issues because of their obligingness in the school issue.

Then Mr. Trietsch demanded that the Ministry of Economy collect material on economic issues in Vilnius.

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Copy

Vilnius, 14 April 1918

Shimshon Rosenboim
Barrister
Vilnius
Sakretstrasse 5a

To Dr. Paul Nathan
Berlin

Most respectable Doctor,

We asked for your valuable advice regarding the establishment of friendly relations with Lithuanians once again. We decided to apply the same tactics with Belarusians. Lithuanians had promised us to hold a discussion of the points defined in a private preliminary conversation, but only one gentleman who was not a member of the State Council turned up at the discussion. We explained to him our wishes and attitudes, asking him to hand them over to the Presidium of the State Council. He told us that we would be invited to the discussion. We waited. In the meantime, the gentlemen went to Berlin without letting us know about it, proclaimed an independent Lithuania, accepted the explanation of the Reich Kanzler (that Lithuania should be divided according to the war's consequences), sent a telegram of thanks to His Imperial Highness, and Mr. Smetona was satisfied with his reply. Certainly, it made us angry. It is not because we particularly objected to the contents (though the question of the war's consequences is very important), but because these gentlemen acted in an autocratic manner and, unfortunately, as if they were recognized. Besides, there is one more circumstance. One should expect that not everything that these gentlemen do would meet approval. They have a strong opposition, and their decisions can be carried out only under pressure of the German administration. When we objected to what was illogical in these decisions, it seemed as if we were hostile to the Germans, or as if we were Bolsheviks who only understand how to build an opposition—a standpoint, which is both incorrect and disadvantageous to us. Everybody intuitively felt a need to show a strong reaction. On my part (my gray hair would not allow me to act impulsively), I suggested sending a telegram to the Reich Kanzler, in which we would express gratitude to His Highness

for the recognition of the Republic of Lithuania, and ask him not to lead further negotiations with a representative of one nation, which has never constituted the majority. However, the Lithuanians let us understand that they were ready for discussion and acknowledged our just requirements; thus it was decided to wait for the results of the discussion.

This discussion finally did take place, but with what results! Lithuanians stuck to their decision to assign the Jews two seats in the State Council, demanding that we recognize and support the State Council, and in return promised us to satisfy our request regarding the conference, but give us support in a form other than we had asked. We could not agree with appointing two representatives, thus unification was impossible. The details of this discussion are very interesting, but I will not bother you with them, at least now.

I will allow myself to draw your attention to Mr. Smetona's interview in *Vossische Zeitung*,⁹ in which Mr. Smetona has the face to make an obviously false statement that there are twelve non-Lithuanians in the State Council, when in fact there are none, and in which he also insolently falsifies the statistics of the population rate. For example, according to him, 3,000 Lithuanians living in Vilnius have turned into 33,000! A "mistake" of mere 1,100 percent. That is how history is made.

In the meantime, I ask you, dear Doctor, to take into account all this information and draw appropriate conclusions.

With great respect, yours faithfully,
Shimshon Rosenboim, barrister

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Copy

Labour Confederation
Bureau of Jews Socialists Paole Zionists
in Stockholm
(in French—Confederation Ouvriere
Socialiste Juive Paole Zion
Bureau Stockholm)

Stockholm, 6 May 1918

Zionist Bureau,

Copenhagen

Dear Sirs,

On May 2, the Sender (L) had a rather long conversation with the members of the local Lithuanian committee Au. Ooles,¹⁰ Dr. Šeinius, and Dr. Žulpas. The second member is a representative of American Lithuanians and is going to return to America one of these days after a yearlong visit in Europe. The main participant in the conversation was Dr. Žulpas, while the other two gentlemen said only several chance remarks. Dr. Žulpas has recently published the book *Essay on the Present, Past and Future of the Lithuanian People*, and the Sender had an impression that the other two gentlemen also agreed with his model.

Certainly, the conversation was mainly focused on the Jewish question in Lithuania. At the very beginning, Dr. Žulpas noted that the requirement of national autonomy for Lithuanian Jews, as formulated by the Sender, should be regarded as founding a state within a state by the efforts of Lithuanians. The Lithuanian state is ready to grant equal rights to all its citizens. He also did not think that Jews could be assimilated by force, but neither did he assign any means for Jewish education. The state will establish state schools with Lithuanian as the teaching language, and all citizens of the state will have a right to attend them. In the districts, where Poles and Belarusians have the majority, schools with appropriate teaching languages will be opened. However, Jews who are spread all over the country, cannot be given schools with Jewish as the teaching language. In many places, where the number of Jews is very small, it is impossible to put into life this requirement. The state should oblige the Jewish people as a public juridical union to take care of their children's education them-

selves, and for this purpose leave an appropriate part of the increased taxes collected from Jewish inhabitants, or to raise taxes for the Jewish people. Žulpas emotionally explained that Jews are seeking privileges, which the Lithuanian state cannot grant them. If Jews are not satisfied with Lithuanian schools, they can establish their own schools with their funds. The state is not obliged in any form to assign them part of their taxes for this purpose. Regarding the permission to acknowledge the minimal rights to official taxes for Jews, Dr. Žulpas thought that at the most, Jewish interpreters could be appointed for those Jews who did not understand Lithuanian in courts. Sometimes Dr. Žulpas acted with too much temperament, and explained that if Jews were not satisfied with equal rights of all citizens, the door was open for them to leave. He added that national oppression of Jews was out of the question. Jews can speak Jewish, publish their newspapers and books, also establish schools, with their own funds, so what else do they want? All explanations that Lithuania cannot deny the national rights that the Jewish minority requires for itself, for other nations in the districts where they constitute the majority, as well as where they are only a minority, would not help. Dr. Žulpas sticks to his opinion that it would be a privilege, a state within a state. He is directly hostile to Jews in his publications. Jews are by no means a totally harmless element with regard to Lithuanians. In the period of czarist rule, they often sided with the executioners, demoralized the Lithuanian nation, etc. Certainly he expects that the full introduction of equal rights will put an end to this pernicious influence. Incidentally, since when are Jews a nationality? In America he maintains friendly contacts with the leading Jews (among others, he mentioned Dr. Magnus and Dr. Wise), and have never heard from them that Jews in Lithuania are claiming such rights. Some threatening hints were dropped as well. He reproached Jews for being enemies of the Lithuanian state, because of which they could not enter the Lithuanian Council. A note of the undersigned: Jews were offered too few representatives, who in addition had to be approved by Lithuanians; all three unanimously explained that Jews constituted only 7–8 percent of the population due to evacuation, thus for 8 percent two representatives were sufficient. They had no information about the fact that Lithuanians wanted to maintain the right to approve or reject the members appointed by Jews and other minorities; they also asserted that seven instead of five representatives were offered for the minorities.

Finally, it should be noted that in their answer to a clear question, the gentlemen stated that they were just an auxiliary committee. It seems that this committee undoubtedly serves the political function as well. Appar-

ently it keeps close contacts with the State Council. We are going to maintain appropriate relations with the committee.

If you wish, you may share the contents of this letter with Dr. Hantke.

Yours respectfully,
Labour Confederation
Bureau of Jews Socialists Paole Zionists
in Stockholm

NOTES

- 1 K. Navickas, *Litva i Antante 1918–1920 g.* (Vilnius, 1970); K. Navickas, *Lietuvių Tautos valstybingumo atkūrimas ir įtvirtinimas (1917–1922)* (Vilnius, 1922); R. Žiugžda, *Lietuva imperialistinių valstybių planuose 1917–1940* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1983); P. Vitkauskas, *Lietuvos Tarybų Respublikos sukūrimas 1918–1919 metais* (Vilnius, 1978); R. Žepkaitė, *Lietuva tarptautinės politikos labirintuose (1918–1922)* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1973).
- 2 E. Bendikaitė, *Sionistinis sąjūdis Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2006); Š. Liekis, “On the Jewish Participation in the Taryba in 1918,” *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, vol. 4 (Vilnius, 1999); Š. Liekis, *A State within a State? Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania 1918–1925* (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2003).
- 3 Shimshon Rosenboim to Dr. Paul Nathan, 14 April 1918, CZA Z3/132, 2.
- 4 E. Gimžauskas, *Baltarusių veiksnys formuojantis Lietuvos valstybei 1915–1923 m.* (Vilnius: Lithuanian History Institute Press, 2003, p. 191); E. Gimžauskas, “Kai kurios 1918 m. lapkričio 27 d. lietuvių ir gudų politinio susitarimo aplinkybės (Lietuvių ir gudų santykių raida 1917–1918 m.),” *Lituanistica*, 1999, no. 4, pp. 3–31.
- 5 Praekt upravlenia Bialoruskoi Chastiu Litvy, Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybės Archyvas (Lithuanian Central State Archive [LCVA]), f. 923, ap. 2, f. 31, l. 149–150, cited from Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 109.
- 6 J. Voronko’s report 12/1919, LCVA, f. 395, ap. 1, f. 6, l. 11–17, cited from Š. Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 110.
- 7 Original in German.
- 8 Vilius Gaigalaitis (1870–1945).
- 9 The full title of the liberal Berlin newspaper was (*Königlich Privilegierte*) *Berlinische Zeitung von Staats- und Gelehrten Sachen*, published between 1721 and 1934.
- 10 Not identified person. Apparently inaccurately written because it doesn’t look like a Lithuanian name.

THE LITHUANIAN ZIONIST CONFERENCE, VILNIUS, 5–8 DECEMBER 1918

EGLĖ BENDIKAITĖ

During its first session on 24 September 1917, the Lithuanian Provisional Council decided to invite representatives of national minorities to its presidium, and a month later, on 17 October it was decided that the minorities themselves should elect these representatives at their conferences.¹ The first Zionist conference held on 5–8 December 1918 in Vilnius crowned the efforts of the Lithuanian Zionist leaders after several unsuccessful attempts to call a general Jewish congress in Lithuania, and the negotiations of Lithuanian and Jewish representatives that lasted more than a year without tangible results.²

The idea to address the *Oberost* authorities regarding permission to legally register the Zionist society in Vilnius has been advanced by individual Zionist leaders already since 1916.³ The goals and tasks raised at the Zionist meeting held on 14 October 1917 in Vilnius emphasized the fact that in an epoch of great political changes, Zionism can no longer remain “a privilege of a narrow circle of people, and Jews as representatives of one nation should understand the necessity of this movement, alongside granting the leaders and the representative offices of the Zionist organization a moral right to act on behalf of all Jews.”⁴ As the differentiation of political forces among Lithuanian Jews grew stronger, the aim of the Zionist leaders to represent the interests of the entire “Jewish street” and assume the role of unifiers persisted for a long time. However, they did not have the courage in their small circle to define the relation with the Lithuanian Council elected at the Lithuanian Conference and decide about possible representation of the Jewish national minority in that Council.

After the meeting of all Jewish political forces on 29 October 1917 in Vilnius, the Lithuanian Zionists—with the help of the executive committee of the World Zionist Organization (WZO)—tried to receive official permission to call a congress of *Oberost* Jews by submitting a memoran-

dum based on the meeting resolutions to the German occupational authorities. However, this attempt failed.⁵ The leader of the Vilnius Zionists and a member of the executive committee of the WZO Shimshon Rosenboim,⁶ who was actively involved in the negotiations for Jewish national interests with both Lithuanian and German representatives, repeatedly stressed the necessity of a general Jewish congress.⁷ It served as a cover for the delay tactics used with the aim to “renegotiate” the quotas for national minorities offered by Lithuanians, the terms of representation and the visions of Lithuania’s territory.

Both representatives of the Lithuanian Council and members of the WZO in Berlin were addressed with an appeal to make negotiations with representatives of the German *Oberost* authorities in April–September 1918 and act as intermediaries in calling a general Jewish conference.⁸ After negotiations with the temporary German commissar in Lithuania Ludwig Zimmerle, permission to call at least a regional Zionist conference was finally received.

The calling of a general conference, which was referred to as “the national Zionist congress” by Rosenboim, and particularly its results were significant not only for the Lithuanian Zionists, but also for the entire Lithuanian Jewish community. Unfortunately, no minutes or shorthand records of this important event have survived. Some details relevant to the conference can be found in scattered fragments of the reports of the Zionist leaders, the Zionist press, and individual documents of that period. The documents of the first Zionist conference published herein consist of three parts. These include the basic theses of the reports read by Shimshon Rosenboim and Jakub Wygodzki⁹ during the conference sessions (6 December 1918) and the political resolutions adopted by the members of the conference (8 December 1918), held at the Manuscript Department of the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (LMAVB RS).

These documents are held in the folder of articles on Lithuanian Jews published in various Jewish newspapers (B. 929) in the stocks of the Lithuanian Scientific Society (F. 255). On 6 December 1918, the daily *Lezte Naves*—led by a new editor, Zionist Leib Jaffe—proclaimed itself the official newspaper of the Lithuanian Zionists. As emphasized in its editorial, “As of now the newspaper has taken a turn in the Zionist direction on the main issues of Jewish life.”¹⁰ Naturally, it was obligatory for the newspaper correspondents and/or members of the editorial board to participate in such an important event of Lithuanian Zionists and present coverage of the events to their readers. The journalistic style of the language of the documents, as well as the articles about the conference that

appeared several days later on the pages of *Lezte Naves*, which repeated verbatim the texts of the above mentioned reports and resolutions, allow us to conclude that the published documents were prepared as a press release. However, the fact that all the surviving documents are in German is rather confusing. None of the publications contained mention of which language or languages was official at the conference. It is only known that the welcome addresses and letters were read in Hebrew.¹¹ The exclusive mentioning of this language was not only a “proof” that the Lithuanian Zionists began to implement the declared revival of the Hebrew language in real life, but also a hint that the conference took place in another, most probably Yiddish, language. At the end of the conference a decision was adopted that Hebrew was to be the official language of the Lithuanian Zionists, but if necessary, Yiddish could also be used.¹²

The language used in the documents—unless it was not determined by an exclusively subjective factor, that is the linguistic skills of the journalists—allows us to think that the documents could have been meant for several addressees at once. The weekly of the German Zionist Association *Jüdische Rundschau* published in German could have received the information from the same source,¹³ as in the course of one month at least several reports about the conference of their fellow party members in Vilnius were published. The documents also could have been received by representatives of the *Oberost* administration, who followed the rapidly evolving events with great interest. And it was with their “assistance” that the negotiations of Lithuanian and Jewish representatives were renewed and a Zionist conference was called. It should be noted that at the conference reports were delivered by seven speakers, who addressed not only the controversial topics of urgent political issues and Jewish participation in them, but also the inner issues of the life of Jews and the Zionist organization.¹⁴ However, with the exception of Rosenboim and Wygodzki’s reports, no reports receive much interest and their texts or abstracts did not survive.

One more copy of the text of the political resolutions adopted at the first Zionist conference along with a short review of the conference is held at the Central Zionist Archive in Jerusalem.¹⁵ The documents are written in quite fluent German, and it is almost certain that the author of the text was Rosenboim, and the documents were addressed to the leaders of the WZO together with his report on Lithuania and Zionism in Lithuania in 1918, which contains a mention of the conference resolutions attached to the report.¹⁶ Out of seven known reports, only Rosenboim’s text was included in the surviving review of the conference. On the one hand,

Rosenboim was best familiar with his own text, which caused the greatest debates at the conference and strong response in the interested political circles. On the other hand, Rosenboim could have included his full text with the aim of allowing the leaders of the WZO to get acquainted with it “first hand.” This way they would form their own opinion about his position on the situation in the country, on a wave of dissatisfaction with his actions and attitudes not only on the “Jewish street” but also among the Zionists. Dr. Yosef Berger,¹⁷ elected at the conference as a member of the central committee of the Lithuanian Zionist Organization, sent out his report on the situation of Lithuanian Jews and Zionism in Lithuania to the main representative offices of the Zionist organization at the beginning of 1919.¹⁸ In the report he emphasized that Rosenboim was “a reactionary, an autocratic old-school Zionist” who did not understand that the epoch required taking regard of the masses and “putting Zionism on a wide democratic basis.” Rosenboim’s policy based on deals and negotiations with representatives of authorities and his earlier contacts with Germans, according to Berger, was out of tune with the time and was not popular with young Zionists.¹⁹ Rosenboim mentioned at the conference that the young Zionists who had returned from Russia made an influence on the ideas and statements of Lithuanian Zionists.

The question of the participants of the conference is no less complicated. In the historiographic sources containing information about the first Zionist conference in Vilnius, different numbers of delegates are indicated. Rosenboim, who had the honor of opening the conference, mentioned in his report that circa ninety delegates had assembled.²⁰ Historian Šarūnas Liekis, referring to the documentary material of the Zionist archive, asserts that sixty-nine delegates from thirty-three Lithuanian cities and towns attended the conference.²¹ In the meantime, *Lezte Naves* presented the name list of the participants and noted that forty-six delegates from various locations of Lithuania, as well as delegates from Minsk and a large group of guests arrived at the conference.²² The same statistics is given by the weekly *Jüdische Rundschau*.²³ Another, no less important aspect is the territorial spread of the local organizations represented by the delegates participating in the conference. It is not known where one-eighth of the delegates came from, but almost a half (49 percent) of those who indicated their place of residence came from the Suwałki *gubernia* that formerly belonged to the Russian empire, and circa 13 percent came from the former Grodno *gubernia*. It is not known according to which principles the delegates of the conference were selected and which organizational structures they represented. The last from a series of reports

about the conference published in *Letzte Naves* contained the journalist's observations that the delegates who had come from the provinces were very young and quite often stood in for the older participants of the Zionist movement. In their opinion, "A contemporary Zionist is moderate, thinks soundly, and is more practical than the earlier ones. And he understands that Zionism is not some tittle-tattle business, but a large and very important work of the people, which should be carried out by more vigorous, energetic and active forces of the community."²⁴ It was also emphasized that despite the young age of the participants, their discussions covered a wide complex of national and political Jewish questions and interests, revealing their competence and deep understanding of the contents of Zionist ideas.²⁵ The general structure of the conference delegates reflects the basis, on which the separate Lithuanian Zionist Organization was built. In other words, the territorial division of the Zionist organization of the Russian empire in the early twentieth century, in which the "Lithuanian" branch consisted of the members from Kaunas, Vilnius, Suwałki, and Grodno *gubernias*, reveals what was the Lithuania whose Jews voiced their opinion about the problems and the future of the Jewish people living in the country.²⁶

The statements of Rosenboim's and Wygodzki's reports, which were formulated in the earlier negotiations with the Lithuanian Council for proportional representation of Jews in administrative institutions and the guarantee of their civic, political, national, and cultural rights consolidated in the country's highest law, did not cause much debate. However, quite heated discussions were aroused by the statements of Rosenboim's report concerning the future of the Lithuanian state, the situation of Jews in it, and their political role in the future.²⁷ Some delegates preferred that more attention should be dedicated to the important issue of Jewish relations with the Lithuanian Council. Others expressed doubts about the statements announced by Rosenboim, which, in their words, "meandered" among political support for Lithuanians, support for Belarusian political interests, protection of independent Jewish political interests, and the pressure of the executive committee of the WZO on Lithuanian Jews to avoid contacts with Polish representatives and stand on the side of Independent Lithuania. In the meantime, the possibility of a federation of Lithuania and the new Russia remained out of discussion.²⁸

The political resolutions adopted at the first Lithuanian Zionist conference consisted of two parts. Part A echoed in general terms the known Copenhagen manifesto issued by the Zionist movement on 25 October 1918, which presented the dual "demands of the Jewish People." These

include the demands for Jewish national rights on Palestine and right for the diaspora Jewry—full equality in rights and “National Autonomy” in countries largely settled by Jews as well as by Jews of other countries demanding it. It urged the Zionist organizations to articulate such demands on a local level and to demand them at the coming Peace Conference.²⁹ In fact the Copenhagen Office of the Zionist movement began to organize the national demands of the Jewish people, becoming its main agent. The manifesto had its desired effect, because within few weeks its demands were incorporated in the program of Zionist conferences around the world and in the program of various Jewish national councils.³⁰ Accordingly part A of the resolutions of the first Lithuanian Zionist conference was dedicated to the general political statements about the coordination of Jewish politics and representation of their national interests in the diaspora in the future. The necessity of establishing a world Jewish representative office and the establishing of Jewish representative offices in different countries, thus acknowledging that Jews constitute one nation, which is a full-fledged member of the League of Nations, was considered one of the crucial tasks.³¹ The Zionist organization claimed to carry out this task; in the rhetoric of its leaders the organization was represented as the protector of the Jewish nation taking care of its better future. However, their colleagues in Lithuania also sought the official legitimization of such a status. Rosenboim emphasized that “Zionists are distinguished from other parties in that Zionists carry out politics for Jews rather than Jewish politics . . . It was the first party on the “Jewish street” to advance the idea of Jewish autonomy, which in the long run became a general slogan of many parties. The same thing happened with other exclusively Zionist ideas, such as, for example, Palestine.”³² However, it seems that mentioning Palestine as an increasingly accepted demand by growing circles of the Jewish people, came to mitigate the emphasis put by the Zionists on questions of local politics and *Gegenwart Arbeit* (as exemplified in part B), and the concomitant decrease of the work for territorialization of the Jews in Palestine.³³

Part B of the political resolutions was exclusively related to Lithuania, the Lithuanian Council, and the future prospects of the role of Jews in the Council and the state. On the one hand, while summing up the discussions that took place at the conference, the Zionists unanimously greeted the restoration of Lithuania as a free and democratic state and, bearing in mind the urgent requirements of that time and “protecting peace and order in the country,” recognized that the Council had the right to implement the assumed tasks. It was decided that Jewish participation in the Council

depended on several conditions, which were not new. The goals of proportional representation, self-government, and the calling of a general Jewish conference were repeatedly brought up in the negotiations of Lithuanian and Jewish representatives that had taken place earlier. On the other hand, as the resolutions were formulated in a politically correct manner, it is not really clear if despite the inner contradictions among the Zionists, the growing political differentiation on the “Jewish street” and the increasing vacuum of balancing political forces in the country, the Zionists still sought to retain the live idea of Lite. That is, Lithuania “occupying a much larger space than Lithuanians themselves imagine”³⁴ and the planned seven Jewish candidates (four from Vilnius and three from the province who were supposed to join later) in the Lithuanian Council.³⁵

The first Zionist conference in Vilnius ended more than a yearlong process of Lithuanian-Jewish discussions and negotiations and produced a practical result: three Jewish representatives agreed to be co-opted into the Lithuanian Council, though without officially representing any Jewish organization and without claiming to represent the entire Lithuanian Jewish community.³⁶ The conference was a Zionist victory against other political forces on the “Jewish street,” which established its leader’s position and brought out a conflict of generations among the Zionists and the changing Zionist priorities in the diaspora.

DECISIONS OF THE ZIONIST CONFERENCE IN VILNIUS

A. Political Resolutions

- 1) The first Zionist conference in Lithuania urges all bodies of the party led by its executive committee to continue vigorous implementation of Jewish politics and representation of Jewish interests. The narrow circle of the members of the executive committee should be expanded by involving representatives of provincial circles; one of the most important tasks of the moment is the establishment of a Jewish representation on a democratic base in the form a World Jewish Congress, and [Jewish] national representation in each country.
- 2) The leaders of the Jewish nation must participate in the work of the Peace Conference representing the interests of the Jewish nation.
- 3) The main goals of the Jewish nation at the Peace Conference are the following:
 - a. Creating general legal guarantees for the creation of our national centre Palestine.
 - b. Creating a citizenry for the establishing of institutions of national-personal self-government for Jewish inhabitants in all countries.
 - c. The Jews of all countries must be recognized as a united Jewish nation; this nation should be also considered a full-fledged member of the League of Nations.
- 4) The conference encourages all bodies of the party to make a priority of the party politics in all the countries of the diaspora the demand of national-personal self-government for Jewish inhabitants. The civic, political and national rights should be explicitly formulated in the Constitutions of the different countries; namely, they should establish a) proportional representation in legislative bodies by means of the National Curia,³⁷ b) Genuine participation in institutions of all levels of administration and courts.

B. Resolutions Concerning Lithuania

- 1) The conference hails the restoration of Lithuania as a free and democratic state based on the principle of full rights and national-personal self-government of its nations.
- 2) The Lithuanian Council does not legitimately represent the nations living in the country, as it has not been elected by democratic principles.
- 3) Bearing in mind the urgent tasks of the moment—the protection of peace and order in the country, as well as the immediate calling of the

National Constituent Assembly (based on electoral system of six principles [general, proportional, secret, direct and equal for men and women])—we recognize that the Council has the right and responsibility to perform and put into life the assumed tasks; for that purpose the limits of its competence should be defined.

- 4) As the calling of the National Constituent Assembly would certainly take much time, we consider it expedient to call a democratic conference as soon as possible, with proportional representation of all nations living in the country.
- 5) We recognize the participation of Jewish representatives in the present Council only on the following conditions: a) the Council shall respect our opinion concerning its competence; b) the Council shall announce that it is ready to agree with proportional representation of all nations living in the country; c) the Council shall announce that it will not create any obstacles for the building of institutions of the Jewish community, the calling of the Jewish Conference in Lithuania, as well as the building of other bodies of Jewish national-personal autonomy in Lithuania.
- 6) Jewish representatives in the Council and the Provisional Government must be elected at a conference of representatives of the Lithuanian Jewish community. However, taking into account the fact that it is urgently necessary for Jews to participate in the country's governing bodies, the Zionist conference considers it possible that Jews can temporarily participate in the Council and the Government upon the condition that their authorizations lose their force on the day of the conference of the executive boards of Jewish communities. They are obliged to resign as members of the Council and the (Provisional) Government on the day of the calling of the conference of representatives of Jewish communities.

Shimshon Rosenboim's Speech at the Zionist Conference in Vilnius on the Topic "Political Situation in Lithuania"

The speaker began with an explanation that the Zionist party carries out real Jewish politics, which meets the nation's interests and at the same time is based on democratic principles. Before, all the other Jewish parties carried out politics for Jews rather than Jewish politics. The Zionist party was the first to advance the motto of national self-government on the "Jewish street." At this time this goal is gradually becoming a motto of

other parties as well. The same thing is happening with other Zionist mototos, and we have a great many followers regarding the issue of Palestine. In the same manner as we should not cease our work for the sake of Palestine under any circumstances, and taking into account the fact that due to purely technical reasons we can make contact with only several groups, so we must show courage in carrying out our own Jewish politics under our own responsibility; we should not leave this to any other party. In his further elaborations the speaker explicated the ideas that the earlier (general) basic principles, on which the Jewish requirements are based, such as the freedom of religion and conscience, equality, etc., have currently lost their meaning. All nations are different and must remain different, but the Jewish nation is even more different than the others. The nation that boasts such a long past has the right for further development according to its special features, its special sensibilities, and its special mode of thinking. We cannot remain closed in the frames of Equality. In the speaker's opinion, Jews must advance the following basic requirements: 1) national self-government, that is the right to arrange our life according to our special features; 2) for that purpose we must be given solid guarantees. The law itself does not guarantee much to us. We need Jews to be legislators. Based on proportional elections Jews must be represented in all institutions of power, from the lowest to the highest, such as, for example a ministry. Then the speaker focused on Jewish politics in Lithuania and its relations with other national groups. He arrived at the conclusion that Jews must stick together with Lithuanians, as only in that case can Jews have the possibility of free development. So that the Lithuanian Jews should not be divided, we must align ourselves with Belarusians, as the concept of Lithuania by itself occupies a much larger space than Lithuanians themselves imagine, because Lithuanians want a smaller Lithuania, in which they could be the majority. The speaker referred to the basic guideline of the Zionist executive committee, which stated from the outset that it was better for Jews to side with Lithuanians rather than Poles. Jews should advocate the interests of independent Lithuania. The speaker ardently supported the idea that in the elections to various institutions of power, Jews should form a specific national group, that is they must vote for themselves. In this way all kinds of incidents with other national groups will be avoided. Then, when Jews vote for Jews, nobody will have anything against it. In Lithuania, three nations are competing against each other. That is why Jews should become an equalizer, with the help of which conflicts would be solved. Thus Jews can play a significant role in Lithuania.

Dr. Wygodzki's Lecture on "The Participation of Jews in the Municipal Administration" Delivered at the Zionist Conference in Vilnius

hereby forward to you the conclusions of his speech. 1) Upon demand of the Jewish city councilmen, all municipalities have to revise their plans or possibly correct them. If the plan of the municipality was expanded at any moment during the past four years, in the course of which the population rate significantly decreased, such an expansion has to be regarded as falsification. (2) The antisemitic budgetary policy conducted by the city council, which aimed to trap the Jews rather than retain the net earnings, has to be replaced by a modern budgetary policy. This policy should include: the revenues, the assets, and, in particular, the capital gains generated in the course of the economic cycle. 3) In the framework of municipal public-sector economy, Jewish workers, craftsmen, tradesmen, physicians, engineers etc. shall obtain employment on the same conditions as non-Jewish persons; Jewish public officials and public employees must be given free access to the municipal public-service positions. 4) The Jewish population has to be granted the possibility to use its own language while dealing with the municipal administration. It must not be forced to use a foreign language. 5) Jewish institutions of social welfare and care have to be supported and subsidized to the same degree as non-Jewish institutions. Jewish hospitals, child-care institutions etc. have to be supported and subsidized by the municipal administration. 6) At the elections to the city council, Jews shall, in an initial phase, vote in their own National Curia. 7) In order to avoid critical incidents between the Jewish faction in the city council and the Jewish community council, two members of the executive committee of community council shall regularly take part in the meetings of the faction, while three members of the faction shall participate in the meetings of the executive committee as consultants. Should a critical incident or a controversy arise between these two institutions, the issue shall be decided by the community council in full assembly, acting as prime authority of Jewish national-personal autonomy. In rare cases, in which the issue at stake is of particular importance, the matter can instead be referred to the Conference of Representatives of the Jewish Communities of Lithuania, acting as supreme authority. 8) On the suburban property belonging to the municipality, affordable dwellings shall be constructed for workers, craftsmen, and merchants—Jewish and Christian. In addition, the Jewish councilmen have to take particularly great care to convert part of this property into long-term leases, which are granted to Jewish workers (as well as craftsmen and merchants). These persons shall

also be given the opportunity to work the land by making use of a highly intensive agriculture system. For this purpose, the basis for agricultural subsidies and cheap loans has to be created. The Jewish councilmen have to consider this task as one of the most important duties, because it is of great national significance. 9) Precautionary measures have to be taken to guarantee a sufficient number of Jews participating as representatives in the administration as well as in the executive bodies of the municipal self-government.

NOTES

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- 1 Minutes No. 2, *Lietuvos valstybės Tarybos protokolai 1917–1918* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1991), p. 132; Minutes No. 12, *ibid.*, p. 142.
- 2 For more, see Š. Liekis, *A State within a State? Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania 1918–1925* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2003), pp. 64–79.
- 3 Y. Broydes, *Vilna ha-yehudit ve-askaneha* (Tel Aviv: Histadrut olei vilna ve-ha-galil, 1939), p. 303.
- 4 “Tsienistishe miting in Vilne,” *Lezte Naves*, 16 October 1917.
- 5 Hantke’s Letter to the *Oberost* Administration, Berlin, October 26, 1917, Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem (hereinafter CZA), F. Z3, File 131, n.p.
- 6 Shimshon Rosenboim (1859–1934). A barrister, a former deputy of the Russian Duma, later a deputy of the Lithuanian Seimas, Rosenboim held the office of the minister without portfolio for Jewish affairs from 29 June 1923 until 12 February 1924; in 1924 emigrated to Palestine and from 13 January 1927 held the position of Lithuania’s honorary consul, and later, consul general. For more, see E. Bendikaitė, “Mittler zwischen den Welten Shimshon Rosenbaum: Jurist, Zionist, Politiker,” in *Osteuropa. Impulse für Europa. Tradition und Moderne der Juden Osteuropas*, ed. by M. Sapper, V. Weichsel, and A. Lipphardt eds., vols. 8–10, (Berlin: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde e.V., 2008), pp. 295–303.
- 7 [Dr. Arthur Hantke’s] letter to the reserve lieutenant Hermann Struck, Berlin, February 22, 1918, CZA, F. Z3, File 132, n.p.
- 8 Š. Liekis, pp. 68–69; Political memoranda of and to the EAC, 1915–18, CZA, F. Z3, File 10, n.p.; Minutes of meetings of Zionist leaders with politicians and statesmen, 1914–19, CZA, F. Z3, File 11, n.p.
- 9 Jakub Wygodzki (1857–1941), a physician, long-term chairman of the Vilnius Jewish community, the first minister without portfolio for Jewish affairs, a member of the Vilnius municipality, and a deputy of the Polish Sejm between 1922 and 1930.
- 10 “Far di leieners,” *Lezte Naves*, 6 December 1918.
- 11 N., “Di ershte konferents fun di litvishe tsionisten in Vilne,” *Lezte Naves*, 8 December 1918.
- 12 “Die erste Landeskonferenz der Zionisten Litauens,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, 17 January 1919, CZA, F. Z3, File 135, n.p.

- 13 Information could have been received from the editorial board of *Letzte Naves* or the central committee of the Lithuanian Zionist Organization. L. Jaffe and A. Rudnicki were members of both bodies.
- 14 The delivered reports were: L. Jaffe, Elections of the Community; Dr. Y. Berger: Our Requirements for the Peace Conference; A. Rudnicki: Organizational Issues; J. Sirkin and A. Munchik, Work for and in Eretz Israel, "Konferenz der litauischen Zionisten," *Jüdische Rundschau*, 17 December 1918, CZA, F. Z3, File 135, n.p.
- 15 Political resolutions of the first Zionist Conference in Lithuania, CZA, F. Z3, 135, n.p.; The first National conference of Lithuanian Zionists, *ibid*.
- 16 Dr. S. Rosenboim's report on Lithuania. The situation of Zionism in Lithuania, CZA, F. Z3, B. 135, n.p.
- 17 Yosef Berger (1884–?), a physician who returned to Vilnius from Russia in 1918 and held various positions in the municipalities of Vilnius and Kaunas and the bodies of Jewish autonomy from 1918–1924, was a deputy of the First and Second Lithuanian Seimas and a long-term headmaster of the Šiauliai Jewish gymnasium before emigrating to Palestine in 1935. He recorded some of his reminiscences in Yosef Berger, "Di Jidishe natsionale oitonomie in der zeltshtendiker Lite 1919-1919, perzenlekhe zikhroines bagleit fun a kritishn iberblik," *Lite*, vol. 1 (New York: Jewish-Cultural Society, 1951), pp. 223–240.
- 18 Dr. Berger's report from Kaunas, 7 January 1919, CZA, F. Z3, File 510, n.p.
- 19 *Ibid*.
- 20 Report of Mr. Barrister Rosenboim from Vilnius on Lithuania, CZA, F. Z3, File 510, n.p.; Dr. S. Rosenboim's report on Lithuania. The situation of Zionism in Lithuania, CZA, F. Z3, File 135, n.p.
- 21 Š. Liekis, p. 76. Most probably he referred to the data of the clippings from the weekly *Jüdische Rundschau* held at the CZA, F. 3, File 135, in one of which (17 December 1918) the above-mentioned information was published, though a message that appeared in the same newspaper a month later contained different data.
- 22 "Di delegaten tsu der tsienistisher konferents," *Letzte Naves*, 8 December 1918.
- 23 "Die erste Landeskonferenz der Zionisten Litauens," *Jüdische Rundschau*, 17 January 1919, CZA, F. Z3, File 135, n.p.
- 24 Ben Zuma, "Di tsionistishe konferents. Arum der konferents," *Letzte Naves*, 12 December 1918.
- 25 *Ibid*.
- 26 "Territorial Branches of the Zionist Organization," *Dziennik Wileński*, 1906, no. 6.
- 27 For more, see the article by Marcos Silber, "Lithuania? But Which? Changing Political Attitude of the Jewish Political Elite in East Central Europe to Emerging Lithuania (1915–1919)," in this volume.
- 28 "Di tsienistishe konferents," *Letzte Naves*, 9 December 1918.
- 29 L. Chasanowitsch and L. Motzkin, eds., *Die Judenfrage der Gegenwart. Dokumentensammlung* (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Judäa a.b., 1919), pp. 68–69.
- 30 O. Janowsky, *The Jews and the Minority Rights (1898–1919)* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), pp. 272–282.
- 31 Decisions of the Zionist Conference in Vilnius, Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių bibliotekos Rankraščių skyrius (Manuscript Department of the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences) (hereinafter LMAVB RS), f. 255, b. 929, l. 26.

- 32 Speech of Barrister S. Rosenboim at the Zionist Conference in Vilnius, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 929, l. 31.
- 33 On the continuous tension between the two components of the Zionist politics see Matityahu Mintz, "Work for the Land of Israel and 'Work in the Present': A Concept of Unity, a Reality of Contradiction," in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 161–170.
- 34 Speech of Barrister S. Rosenboim at the Zionist Conference in Vilnius, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 929, l. 31.
- 35 Dr. S. Rosenbaum's report on Lithuania. The situation of Zionism in Lithuania, CZA, F. Z3, File 135, n.p.
- 36 On the issue of cooptation of Jews into the Lithuanian Council, 11 December 1918, LMAVB RS, f. 255, b. 1089, l. 1–13.
- 37 "National Curia" means the establishment of a register, in which every citizen is recorded according to the nationality he had to opt for. The nationalities constituted in this way were electing their representatives to the legislative bodies, predefined in number by legislative and/or constitutional acts, in an election procedure totally separate from the other nationalities; see http://edocs.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/volltexte/2008/38032/original/Welt_1906_45.pdf.

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The volume discusses the political cooperation between Jews and Lithuanians from the last decades of the 19th century until the early 1920s. These years saw the transformation of both Jewish and Lithuanian political life. Within the Jewish community, the previously dominant integrationists were now challenged both by those who believed that the Jews were not a religious but an ethnic or proto-nationalist group and those who believed that only with the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist state would Jewish integration be possible. Among the Lithuanians, the emergence of a modern national identity became increasingly prevalent.

“The collection hangs together very well and brings to the public much new secondary and primary material. This is a most valuable addition to our understanding of the complex inter-ethnic relation in north-eastern Europe in the last years of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century.”

— *Antony Polonsky, Brandeis University*

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